

## Aligned with Regional Vision and Goals:

- Consistent & Connected

## Practical:

- Logical
- Time Periods
- Initial Tasks
- Responsibility

## Broadly Supported: Persuasive

## Module 7

### Introduction

By the time a region reaches Module 7, they should be ready to weave the pieces together to design a practical and persuasive plan that is aligned with the region's vision and goals. All the explorations of demographics, comparative advantage, clusters, assets and challenges stand ready to merge into the final plan guiding the path toward regional economic success. For the particular high quality plan elements explored in Module 7, the Southern Tier plan as a whole, unfortunately, falls short of several of the SET expectations. An exploration of the plan's strengths within these elements are discussed below along with some suggestions that would help a regional plan be even stronger than depicted in this example.

### Aligned with Regional Vision and Goals: Consistent and Connected

*Southern Tier's Vision statement is:*

*Building on a strong foundation of existing businesses and higher education institutions, the Southern Tier region uses a collaborative approach to leverage its globally competitive advantages to attract talent and investment for the*

*development of industry clusters. Our focus will be on increasing the size and prosperity of the region's workforce through new business creation based on high-technology discoveries and other entrepreneurship activities, while ensuring healthy communities and protecting the natural beauty and resources of the region.*

As worded in their plan, the Southern Tier strategies are:

1. The Southern Tier. . .New York's Leader in Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Technology
2. Southern Tier Transportation Alliance. . .Building Next Generation Transportation Technology and Manufacturing
3. Health Care 2020. . .Integrating Health Care Providers, Higher Education and Cutting-Edge Technology
4. Revitalizing the Rural Farm- and Forest-Based Economy of the Southern Tier
5. Strengthening The Southern Tier's Economic Development Backbone

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime framed

Southern Tier organized their plan under five major topics, which they call strategies. Four of the five are directly related to one of the identified industrial clusters in the region. While these strategies lack the clarity of being S.M.A.R.T., a clear tie to the related cluster is still evident. For example, Southern Tier's first strategy builds off the cluster analysis on clean energy industries in which the Southern Tier and a neighboring region both showed significant interest and growth. Southern Tier's second strategy connects with the transportation and advanced manufacturing clusters from the region's cluster analysis. Transportation investments were found to have a high multiplier effect due to their ability to increase development options for component manufacturers and suppliers, thus strengthening the emerging advanced manufacturing cluster. The third strategy is directly tied to the healthcare industry, another of the region's strong clusters, which also has direct potential to help address two of the biggest perceived challenges to economic growth in the region. The fourth strategy shows the value the region expressed in supporting its agriculture base. The final strategy transcends the particular industry clusters to take a more broad-stroked look at the overarching infrastructure needs of the region. Including such items as broadband access and new business development sites, this strategy acknowledges, similar to Porter's Diamond Theory, that competitive advantage involves being business-friendly across a number of realms.

The Southern Tier begins with a vision of collaboration focused on industrial clusters, then moves to identifying the particular clusters that are important economic drivers in the region. Once identified, these clusters become the focus of the five strategies. Even though the strategies (which correspond to the SET Goals) are lacking in clarity, the connections are still clear and show consistency with the overarching vision.

One particularly positive note about the plan's written design is in the assembling of a number of important elements in one place surrounding each strategy. This helps the reader connect

the pieces. For instance, the detailed descriptions of the strategies follow a consistent outline which includes action items, related opportunities, cost, impacts, leveraging resources, implementation and measurable outcomes. Having all of this information in one place helps provide a connection among the various elements.

## Practical: Logical, Time Periods, Initial Tasks, Responsibility

**Logical:** As noted above, the detailed descriptions contain a number of important clues to the logical selection of the strategies and related actions (pages 106-136). While the writing style could be clearer, the logic behind selecting the strategies and associated action steps seems clear. The reader can grasp how the strategies related to the clusters and how the action items support the overarching strategies. Adding in the related opportunities, resources, and anticipated outcomes strengthens the story further.

**Time Periods, Responsibility, and Initial Tasks:** The section titled “Implementation Agenda” (pages 139-144) provides a snapshot of the strategies, action items, lead agency, additional partners, related resources and an abbreviated timeline (Year 1-5) in a quick read table format. Identifying a lead agency for each action item is a strength of the plan and shows at a glance which agency/organization is responsible for ensuring progress. The timeline is also helpful as a thumbnail of anticipated deadlines. However, both the time periods and responsibilities would be strengthened with additional detail. For instance, the first action item under strategy one has Cornell Cooperative Extension offices throughout the region, county and local municipal government agencies, and the Southern Tier Region Economic Development Corporation as the lead and partners. While it is not possible to know for sure, it is very likely that this listing includes many different individuals that may need to take on specific responsibilities. Yet, just based on this information, it is not clear exactly who is responsible for making this happen. Likewise, more detail is needed on the initial steps that will take place in order to make the action item a reality. Again, the first example has the action item taking place over years 1-3. Having a specific Plan of Action that details the precise steps needed over at least the initial 6-12 months, the person(s) responsible for each step (not just the agency or organization) and a detailed timeline broken down by months or weeks rather than just years would greatly increase the ownership (responsibility) of the action. Perhaps the Southern Tier planners have done this work, but did not include that document here as it would likely be more of an internal use document. However, for SET teams, this is an expectation and is accomplished through completion of the Plan of Action presented in this module.

## Broadly Supported: Persuasive

A key component of “persuasive” is that the plan is written in a straightforward, non-technical manner that helps engage citizens. One area in which the Southern Tier plan is particularly lacking in this component is their failure to clearly articulate goals throughout the document.

Use of the terms “strategies” and “action items” implies movement, yet the anticipated action is not clear from the wording of these strategies throughout the first 100+ pages of the document. Instead, the document continually refers to the five strategies exactly as listed on page 2 of this document. It is not until the reader moves into the detailed section under each of these separate strategies (pages 107 – 136) that any hint of the associated action is presented. Even then, the reader must plow through several paragraphs to have a sense of what the strategy is to accomplish. Likewise, the wording of the action items under each strategy does not include any action (verbs). The plan would be much more persuasive if the reader could get a sense early into the document of the scope of the goals and related action items in a clearer manner. On a positive note, the connections made within the detailed descriptions to the various related elements does help in providing a clearer picture of what lies ahead.

## Your Plan: What to Do in Module Seven:

At this point, you may be experiencing “meeting fatigue.” However, this is not the time to take shortcuts that can compromise your hard work to date. Instead, take time to develop the planning tools provided in this Module as they are specifically designed to address four of the five high quality plan elements described within the heading “practical:” logical, time periods, initial tasks, and responsibility. Additionally, connect the dots within your plan. Show a clear path aligning the region’s vision to its comparative advantage discoveries, to goal selection and the related action steps. This flow adds credibility to the plan and fosters broad support for the plan within the region. Last, but not least, think about your reader as you write the plan. Make it easy to understand and follow. Keep the language clear and to the point. Boiling down complex plans to shorter versions for the sake of readability is good, but be sure that you do not cut so much that the reader is left guessing at the thrust of the work.

Write the Regional Economic Development Plan section of the template. Fine-tune other related sections.

Continue building these sections as you explore Module 8.