

Practical: Targets and Time Periods

Module 8

Introduction

In Module 7, your region looked at finalizing goals and developing an implementation plan complete with action items, responsible parties, and timelines. Tied to the success of the regional economic development strategies is the creation and monitoring of targets and performance measures. Without a measurement plan, your region will lack opportunities to make course corrections along the way and to accurately record and celebrate impacts.

This document will focus on the pluses and minuses of the Southern Tier region's creation and use of a performance measurement plan. As noted in Module 8, this final task in designing your regional economic development plan should not be taken lightly. Careful attention to defining manageable measures along the way and designing a process for monitoring that is efficient and effective will go a long way toward guiding your region to success.

Targets

In the detailed discussion of each of the five strategies presented by the Southern Tier is a section titled "Projected Five Year Outcomes and Measurable Results." As is noted by the Southern Tier plan writers, five sub-groups worked in tandem to develop these strategies. Some of the variance among the groups is seen in the relative strength of how this measurement segment is written under each strategy. Some of these, for instance, are written in measurable terms such as:

- Exports of energy-related products measured by sales to entities outside of New York State TARGET: 150% increase by year four; 200% increase by the end of year five (page 116)
- Train 1,000 workers for energy efficiency jobs (energy retrofit installers) [by the end of year five] (page 120)
- Creation of one major new farm market [by the end of year five] (page 132)
- Reduce [broadband internet] underserved residents and businesses in the region from 15% to 2% [by the end of year five].
- Eight to ten sites secure New York Shovel Ready Certification and will be prepared to receive tenants over the next five years (page 136)

- Train a minimum of 1,450 new and replacement health care workers within five years, with emphasis on registered nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, technicians, technologists, and health care IT workers (page 130)

These examples listed above could be measured and would provide some opportunities to gauge long-term success. However, other sections used wording that was vague and would lead to challenges in measurement such as:

- Improved health management (127)
- Quicker response and better care (127)
- Support of New York State's goal to reform its Medicaid program (127)
- Support regional efforts of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. (131)

In addition to these elements written into each strategy's details, the plan includes a three page table titled "Outcomes and Activities to Be Measured" (pages 149-151). While the design of the tables has some appeal in that it is a quick read of intended outcomes, the content, again, lacks clarity in some parts. On the positive side, though, all of the items mentioned are at least theoretically measurable in that they use terms such as "number of," "percentage growth," and "increase/decrease in." This is at least a good starting point. Wording measurements in terms of things that can be counted helps hone in on what you are seeking to accomplish. What would make these target measures even stronger, though, would be to include goals or targets. For instance, simply measuring the "number of telemedicine encounters" might become "increase the number of telemedicine encounters by 30% by the end of year five." Likewise, "Use of publicly owned, unused or underused property" might become "Transition of a minimum of six publicly owned, unused or underused property to senior citizen housing within five years." Adding additional details regarding the number of senior adults to be served would be an added plus.

Time Periods

Another way the Southern Tier measurement plan could be strengthened is in attention to the spectrum of outcomes, including short, intermediate and long-term. The majority of the plan's identified outcomes, both within the individual strategy discussions and in the measurement plan table, are long-term in nature, taking well over a year to begin to show significant measurable change. Taking this plan at face value, the Southern Tier runs the risk of being well into at least their second year of work with no measurement gauges in place to help refine directions as they go. To be half way through a five year plan with no pointers is a risky approach with the potential of significant frustration and missed targets. Taking time to develop a "measure as you go" plan would greatly enhance the region's opportunities for successfully steering a course to completion.

Your Plan: What to Do in Module Eight:

As your plan nears completion on paper, the real work of implementation begins. Designing a thoughtful, yet manageable measurement plan is one of the key ingredients to long-term success. As was the case in developing strong goals, think S.M.A.R.T. as you develop measurement targets. Select a mix of short (less than six months), intermediate (1-2 year) and long-term (2+ year) targets. Be sure to complete the measurement plan by considering who, how, when and where the measures will be tracked. The measurement plan template included in Module 8 will help you organize the pieces to align with the goals you developed in Module 7.

Write the “Evaluation Plan” section of the template.