

[Mohawk Valley]

# Regional Plan

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	1
<b>Regional Service Strategies</b> .....	2
<b>Sector Initiatives for In-demand Industry Sectors or Occupations</b> .....	4
<b>Regional Labor Market Analysis</b> .....	6
<b>Regional Spending Plan</b> .....	10
<b>Supportive Services</b> .....	10
<b>Economic Development</b> .....	11
<b>Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting Agreement</b> .....	11
<b>Public Comment</b> .....	12

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## Regional Service Strategies

- a. Identify regional plan strategies and specifically provide detail on how regional plan strategies relate to the workforce needs of local businesses as well as the priority projects from the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC).

The Local Workforce Development Boards of Fulton, Montgomery, and Schoharie and Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida Counties are committed to providing a seamless delivery of services to our customers, recognizing that continuous improvement is critical to the goal of a truly seamless delivery of services.

The LWDBs of the Mohawk Valley agree to provide WIOA Basic and Individualized Career Services to all Adult and Dislocated Worker customers regardless of which Career Center they visit to access services. Registration will be completed through the One Stop Operating System (OSOS), and all staff will enter customer activities, services, and comments in a timely manner. This coordination of service delivery will assist businesses, jobseekers, and employees in times of business growth as well as business downsizing or closing.

The LWDBs of the Mohawk Valley work closely with local businesses, assessing their needs and providing assistance. Examples include: promoting job opportunities (such as CREE/Wolfspeed); providing training grant program funds to eligible participants for upskilling/placement; free online skills training; providing webinars (such as ongoing DFAS application procedures); free online job fairs; and the development of the Mohawk Valley Advanced Manufacturing Plan (including agribusiness, a priority of the REDC as stated in their 2021 MVREDC report).

The Local Workforce Development Boards of the Mohawk Valley (MVLWDB) works closely with the MV REDC to coordinate strategies that align with the work of the REDC. The MVLWDB Directors attend the REDC meetings and participate in their committees when possible. Our demand occupations are aligned with the goals of the REDC and we work closely to find and match the skills of employees needed by employers (new and existing) that work with the REDC. In addition we work closely with eligible training providers to provide the kind of skills training that match with the needs of employers especially those new to the area that work closely with the REDC.

In the 2021 MVREDC annual report, regional priorities are Manufacturing and Tech industries, emphasizing that these regional priorities, which include cybersecurity, have “escalated to critical importance on the global stage.” In alignment with these priorities, we are addressing critical workforce shortfalls in these industries.

The Workforce Development Board, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida County (HMO) training grant program: H1-B One Workforce IT/Cybersecurity Grant, Project Excite, provides short term trainings in IT, Cybersecurity and Advanced Manufacturing and assists with long term trainings in same fields. The program also offers participants job placement in related field upon completion. It is available to residents of Chenango, Delaware, Fulton, Herkimer,

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Madison, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego and Schoharie Counties, ages 18 and older and not enrolled in secondary school.

The Workforce Development Board, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida County (HMO) training grant program: The Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations grant helps recruit, train, and retain women in quality pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and encourages them to pursue apprenticeships and non-traditional occupations. Non-traditional occupations are occupations where women make up 25% or less of the workforce, including but not limited to: trades, information technology (IT), advanced manufacturing, transportation, public safety, agriculture, and more. This program is available in Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Montgomery, Oneida, Onondaga, Otsego, Schoharie, St. Lawrence, Tioga and Tompkins counties.

The REDC also notes the healthcare sector workforce as a priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for healthcare workers, particularly in rural areas. The Workforce Development Board, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida County (HMO) training grant program: H1-B Rural Healthcare Training Grant addresses this shortage by providing unemployed and underemployed Individuals training in a wide range of subject areas resulting in credentials, from micro-credentials to degrees, based on needs, abilities and experience to place trainees in jobs where they can advance along career ladders. The program serves residents of Chenango, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, St. Lawrence, Warren and Washington Counties

- b. Provide a list of executed cooperative agreements where applicable and define how local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the regional strategies.

Based on input from more than 300 stakeholders across the region, the Workforce Development Board of Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties and its partners have developed the Mohawk Valley Advanced Manufacturing Project to help employers and training providers better align training education resources with the needs of our employers.

After meetings across the region and efforts by key partners to drill down into the specifics of several key clusters, the region agreed to educational priorities that include the development of a stronger manufacturing pipeline that begins with the development of strong foundational math and science skills in the pre-college population and a focus on teaching innovation to develop a flexible change-oriented workforce. The region is also building bridges to connect employers who need workers with potential employees whose barriers to employment include language issues. Employers noted that off-the-shelf language programs fail to help them fully harness the potential of the region's refugee populations. Employers noted that as they compete in a global environment, just-in-time training for incumbent workers is vital to giving their workers the skills they need to compete against the word and win and also to address key health and safety regulations in an ever-evolving workplace.

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The plan, endorsed by local leaders across the region, serves as the road map for the WDB and its partners as they collaborate to develop solutions that can power the region's manufacturing sector in the years to come.

## Sector Initiatives for In-demand Industry Sectors or Occupations

a. Identify in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

According to the Workforce Development Board Herkimer, Madison & Oneida Counties, Inc. Strategic Action Plan 2020-2022, existing in-demand industry sectors for the region include healthcare, education services, manufacturing, social assistance, and hospitality and food services. As for emerging in-demand sectors, they include call centers, and CREE high tech advanced manufacturing.

In FMS, existing in-demand sectors continue to include advanced manufacturing, distribution centers and healthcare as well as agribusiness and farm-to-table enterprises and related industries such as yogurt and beverage (craft brewing, distilling, and wineries) which were emerging industries in our previous plan. The speed of the emergence of these industries was slowed by the COVID pandemic but has increased in recent months as COVID restrictions have eased; and bars, restaurants, and schools have re-opened increasing the demand for these products.

According to the Regional/LWIA Priority Occupations data, in-demand industry occupations as of June 2021 are as follows: General and Operations Managers, Human Resources Managers, Food Service Managers, Medical and Health Services Managers, Managers, All Other, Purchasing Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail and Farm Products, Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators, Business Operations Specialists, All Others, Accountants and Auditors, Computer Support Specialists, Computer Network Support Specialists, Business Intelligence Analysts, Electrical Engineers, Electrical and Electronic, Medical and Clinical Lab Technologists, Social and Human Services Assistants, Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other, Paralegals and Legal Assistants, Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education, Except Special Education, Self-Enrichment Education Teachers, Library Technicians, Teacher Assistants, Graphic Designers, Coaches and Scouts, Media & Communication Workers, Dietitians and Nutritionists, Recreational Therapists, Respiratory Therapists, Registered Nurses, Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists, Medical and Clinical Lab Technicians, Dental Hygienists, Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians, Radiologic Technologists, Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, Dietetic Technicians, Veterinary Technologists and Technicians, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses, Medical Records and Health Information Technicians, Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other, Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, Occupational Health and Safety Specialists, Home Health Aides, Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants, Psychiatric Aides, Nursing Assistants, Occupational Therapist Assistants, Physical Therapist Assistants, Physical Therapist Aides, Dental Assistants, Medical Assistants, Medical Equipment Preparers, Medical Transcriptionists, Phlebotomists, Healthcare Support Workers, All Other, Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, Security Guards, First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Cooks,

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Institution and Cafeteria Cooks, Restaurant Food Preparation Workers, Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers, First-Line Supervisors of Personal Service Workers, Child Care Workers, Personal and Home Care Aides, First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers, First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Non-Retail Sales Workers, Insurance Sales Agents, Sales Representatives, Services, All Other Real Estate Sales Agents, Bill and Account Collectors, Billing and Posting Clerks and Machine Operators, Bookkeeping, Accounting and Auditing Clerks, Tellers, Customer Service Representatives, Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs, Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks, Interviewers, Except Eligibility and Loan, Library Assistants, Clerical Receptionists and Information Clerks, Stock Clerks and Order Fillers, Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Legal Secretaries, Medical Secretaries, Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive Office Clerks, General, Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other, Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators, Electricians, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters, Highway Maintenance Workers, Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics, Helpers: Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers, Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers, Maintenance and Repair Workers, General, Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic, Extruding and Drawing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders Metal and Plastic, Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders Metal and Plastic, Machinists, Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators and Tenders, Metal and Plastic, Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers, Sawing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Wood, Water and Liquid Waste Treatment Plant and System Operators, Bus Drivers, School, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers, Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs, Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators, Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Hand Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors

- b. Identify and describe sector initiatives that address the needs of the identified in-demand industry sectors or occupations.

The HMO and FMS workforce development initiatives are particularly strong in the focus on being responsive to local employer needs. By promoting training programs, based on in-demand occupations in the region, the HMO and FMS workforce development boards ensure that they are devoting their resources to provide training that will prepare job seekers for those occupational areas employers have a need for. Since the pandemic began, both HMO and FMS Workforce have been able to continue supporting jobseekers by offering virtual options for services, such as online skills training and job fairs. Additionally, our area includes three community colleges, two SUNY schools, and two private colleges. In addition we also have several BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Education Services) programs. All have strong educational programs, many of which can be customized to meet local employer needs.

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## Regional Labor Market Analysis

- a. Include an analysis of regional economic conditions incorporating the existing emerging demand sectors and occupations, the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations, as well as noting if the information used in the analysis was provided by the New York State Department of Labor's (NYSDOL) Research and Statistics (R&S) Division (if not, provide what source was used for complete analysis).

Based on data from NYS Department of Labor's Regional Economist, information from our Regional Business Services Team and individual LWDB Business Services Teams and Boards, it is easy to document the abundance of middle skill job openings across the Mohawk Valley Region in Health Care. Examples of medium to high priority jobs in the region, the FMS LWDA, and the HMO LWDA include Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Radiologic Technologists, Physical Therapists, and other Healthcare Workers. In light of an aging population, particularly in upstate New York, and the retirement of many older workers, the need for new health care workers in the pipeline will be ongoing for the foreseeable future.

Additionally, also based on data from NYS Department of Labor's Regional Economist, information from our Regional Business Services Team and individual LWDB Business Services Teams and Boards, it is easy to document the many middle skill job openings across the Mohawk Valley Region in Advanced Manufacturing and associated fields such as Transportation. While the belief is that Manufacturing is no longer a demand occupation in upstate New York, the fact is that the industry has not gone away, but that it has changed, requiring employees with greater skills in science, technology, engineering and math. Examples of medium to high priority Advanced Manufacturing jobs in the region, the FMS LWDA, and the HMO LWDA include Computer Controlled Machine Tool Operators; Machinists; Welders; Electricians; Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics, Multiple Machine Tool setters, Fork Lift Operators, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics, and Commercial Truck Drivers.

Recently Agri-Business is dramatically increasing along with Craft Brewing, Distilling and Farm to Table Initiatives. Our industrial base has kept pace with dairy processing expansion and innovation, producing for local, downstate and global markets. The region is positioned to serve a growing demand for sustainably produced craft foods and beverages to domestic and international markets. This continued growth will lead to more jobs and enhanced wages in our communities.

In addition to the production of goods in the Agri-Business sector, this sector has also fostered increased interest in tourism. The tourism sector employs more than 25,000 in the Mohawk Valley. Jobs in the tourism sector tend to be more entry level and provide hard-to-serve workers with an opportunity to gain skills and experience.

- b. Describe the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to meet the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations.

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To meet the employment needs of businesses in these sectors and occupations, clear and understandable information on career pathways, sector strategies, local demand occupations, growing industries and skill sets to eligible providers of WIOA services is needed. Local providers will be encouraged to utilize this information when designing services as well as training programs.

Additionally, some strategies used to support a regional workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area include:

Assistance to businesses to find qualified workers, Job Posting/Referral services, Recruitment, Pre-screening and Interviewing assistance, use of Career Centers for recruitments, Customized Training to upgrade the skills of incumbent workers, On-the-Job training subsidies to offset the cost of training workers, tax credit information, labor market information, testing sites for the certifications, assistance accessing grant funding for employee training initiatives, rapid response services.

c. Provide an analysis of the regional workforce.

According to the New York State Department of Labor, the unemployment rate in the Utica-Rome Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) increased from 5.1% in March 2020 to 7% in March 2021. The unemployment rate fell from 7.8% in February.

For the 12-month period ending March 2021, the nonfarm job count in the Utica-Rome MSA decreased 8,500, or 6.8%, to 117,400. Private sector employment fell 5,900, or 6.3%, to 87,800.

Natural resources, mining and construction (+100) gained jobs over-the-year. Job losses were posted in: education and health services (-2,600), government (-2,600), leisure and hospitality (-1,500), manufacturing (-800), other services (-700), trade, transportation and utilities (-200), information (-100), and professional and business services (-100).

Additionally, the unemployment rates by County are:

Herkimer County: Unemployment in March 2020 was 9.4%, in February 2021 it was at 8.9% and by March 2021 it had fallen to 8.3%.

Madison County: Unemployment in March 2020 was 5.5%, in February 2021 it was at 7% and by March 2021 it had fallen to 6.3%

Oneida County: Unemployment in March 2020 was 4.9%, in February 2021 it was at 7.5% and by March 2021 it had fallen to 6.7 percent.

Fulton County: Unemployment in April 2020 was 16.6%, in March 2021 it had fallen to 7.6%, and in April 2021 it had fallen again to 6.7%

In Montgomery County: Unemployment in April 2020 was 15.9%, in March 2021 it had fallen to 7.8%, and in April 2021 it had fallen again to 6.8%.

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In Schoharie County: Unemployment in April 2020 was 12.6%, in March 2021 it had fallen to 6.0% and in April 2021 it had fallen again to 5.2%

These FMS rates are still higher than the April 2019 rates of 4.6%, 4.6%, and 4.1 respectively, but we expect that the 2021 rates will continue to fall.

The workforce throughout the Mohawk Valley Region is greying, and many people are starting to retire. There is not a ready and trained workforce to fill these positions. Most positions now require a high school diploma or more, and that number is predicted to grow. Even entry level positions in distribution centers require technical skills such as computer skills. Additionally, most positions require the use of soft skills such as communicating in the workplace, team work, ability to work independently, and time and attendance. There is also a loss in the population of younger people who leave the area to attend college and do not return.

Additionally, the HMO Strategic Action Plan summarized the Workforce Landscape with the following information:

Population in Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties is declining annually at the rate of .03%.

The 2019 unemployment in the HMO region was higher than the national rate of 3.175% and New York State rate of 3.6%: Herkimer: 5.1%, Madison: 3.7% and Oneida: 3.7%.

The Labor Force Participation Rate in Herkimer-Madison-Oneida (HMO area) Counties is 58.9% as compared to 63.2% in New York State and the United States.

The labor force is shrinking in prime age groups (25 – 54 years) which impacts and creates issues for attracting and retaining production workers, technical professionals and healthcare workers.

The workforce is aging. The median age is 41.5 years, as compared to New York State at 38.4 years, and 49% of the workforce are over the age of 48.

The annual wage increases in the HMO area lags New York State: 3.8% vs. 5.2%.

20% of Utica's population is foreign born.

Approximately 50% of occupations require either a higher education degree or technical skills level training, increasing the retention and recruitment challenge.

There continues to be an abundance of middle skill job openings in health care and educational services and a need to address demand for new skills in the manufacturing sector and growing sectors such as life sciences and cyber security.

The concentration of occupations today and the demand in the next decade for workers is predominately in healthcare, education services, manufacturing and social assistance.

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Coupled with the fact that many of these jobs currently pay \$33,000 or less, make it difficult to attract and retain workers.

The HMO Workforce Strategic Plan Situation Analysis identified the education and healthcare sectors as being the dominate employers in the three-county industry mix.

There continues to be an abundance of middle skill job openings in Health Care and a need to address demand for new skills in the advanced manufacturing sector and growing sectors such as life sciences and cyber security.

The Situation Analysis revealed demand for workforce in the next ten years would be most serious in the healthcare sector, with need to fill nearly 3,600 jobs ranging from RNs to Personal Care Aides and Nursing Assistants. Another large job cluster that will require significant infusion of workers is hospitality and food service with 1,200 janitorial and housekeeper positions and 4,525 food service workers.

According to the HMO Workforce Strategic Plan, approximately 50% of occupations in all industry sectors require either a higher education degree or technical skills level training, increasing the retention and recruitment challenge. In terms of education attainment, the HMO workforce exceeds the NYS average for high school diploma, some college and associate's degrees; however, it falls short in bachelor's degree and education at the graduate level.

In FMS, the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) shows Fulton County has an estimated labor force of 25,982 with 24,632 employed and 1,326 unemployed. Montgomery County has an estimated labor force of 23,203 with 21,036 employed and 1,541 unemployed. Schoharie County has an estimated labor force of 15,250 with 14,429 employed and 817 unemployed. Although not addressed in the 2019 ACS, the 2018 ACS reported that in Fulton County, approximately 63% of employed residents work within the county while 37% commute out. In Montgomery County, approximately 55% of employed residents work within the county while 45% commute out. In Schoharie County, approximately 59% of the employed residents work within the county while 41% commute out. Employers in the three counties are all interested in tapping into the workforce that currently commutes out of their county each day as well as employees from neighboring counties that are not part of the local FMS workforce development area.

In looking at a population of 25 years and older: In Fulton County approximately 35.7% have a high school degree, 18.6% have some college but no degree, 14.9% have an Associate's Degree, 9.8% have a Bachelor's Degree, and 8.4% have a professional or graduate degree. The remaining 12.7% have less than a high school diploma. Montgomery County is similar in that approximately 35.4% have a high school diploma, 19.9% have some college but no degree, 13.8% have an Associate's Degree, 10.3% have a Bachelor's Degree, and 7.5% have a professional or graduate degree. The remaining 13.2% have less than a high school diploma. In Schoharie County, 35.7% have a high school diploma, 18.9% have some college but no degree, 12.6% have an Associate's Degree, 13.2% have a Bachelor's Degree, and 9.3% have a professional or graduate degree. The remaining 10.3% have less than a high school diploma.

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In the FMS population of 18 years to 64 years, it is estimated that in Fulton County 14.9% have a disability, in Montgomery County 14.2% have a disability, and in Schoharie County 13.3% have a disability.

Regarding FMS populations with English as a Second Language, in people 5 years and older: In Fulton County 97.1% speak "English Only" at home, in Montgomery County 58.2% speak "English Only" at home, and in Schoharie County 95.3% speak "English Only" at home. The majority of "Other Language" speakers at home are Fulton County with 2.9%, Montgomery County with 14.8% (primarily Spanish), and Schoharie County with 4.7%.

This information for FMS was taken from the American Community Survey of 2019 where data is based on a sampling and is a 5-year estimate.

## Regional Spending Plan

- a. Include a regional spending plan that includes administrative cost arrangements between LWDBs and the pooling of funds where applicable.

The LWDBs have established a Regional Spending Plan which focuses on businesses/industries that cross county/LWDB lines in their need for new employees and upgrading of current employees. The LWDBs agree (within their funding ability) to provide training services and funds as long as either the business or employee resides within their LWDB. The Regional Spending Plan also includes the ability to share administrative costs if the need is identified and agreed to by both FMS and HMO WDBs.

## Supportive Services

- a. Describe how supportive services will be coordinated throughout the region.

Supportive services are not coordinated with the LWDBs in the region but rather through our partners that provide many of the supportive services we offer. To make supportive services efficient and convenient for our customers. Since the two LWDBs share many partners like ACCES VR, Community Action Agencies, Resource Center for Independent Living, A4T and others their common shared policies are coordinated through their offices.

The LWDBs recognize that the provision of Supportive Services can be critical to the success of WIOA participants in training programs. FMS and HMO agree to share their supportive services policies with all regional workforce staff for their reference.

## Economic Development

- a. Describe how economic development and workforce investment activities will be coordinated in the region and specifically provide detail how continued coordination can further relationships between the region and its respective REDC.

The LWDBs of the Mohawk Valley Region strive to align our initiatives and strategies with the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council and to work closely with many economic development partners to share information and provide seamless services through a Workforce Development/Economic Development partnership. These partners include Chambers of Commerce, Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs), the Fulton County Center for Regional Growth, the Montgomery County Business Development Center, the Mohawk Valley Regional Business Services Team, the Regional Workforce Development Task Force, the Schoharie County Chamber Business and Education Committee, SEEC (Schoharie Economic Enterprise Corporation), the Mohawk Valley Revitalization Committee, and others.

The WDB Executive Directors also attend Mohawk Valley REDC meetings as possible, in part to ensure that the workforce programs and strategies mesh closely with the needs of the region, as defined by the REDC.

When economic development agencies bring in site selection teams to view potential sites, LWDB Directors or their staff are available to meet with the teams to provide information on the local and regional workforce and training opportunities available through the LWDBs and their partners.

## Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting Agreement

- a. Include an agreement concerning the Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting. Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting may be negotiated by LWDBs individually, involving strategies and methods collaborated on at the regional level. If this is the case for the region, include a statement that reflects that the measures were negotiated individually and any collaborative efforts devised and agreed to by the region.

The FMS and HMO WDBs agree to review quarterly performance reports as a regional team to identify issues of performance and to develop performance improvement plans that benefit not only each individual LWDB's performance, but the region as a whole. Once performance improvement plans have been developed, this information will be shared with workforce staff to give them a better understanding of how the delivery of services may impact on performance. The FMS and HMO WDBs will discuss Performance Measure negotiations prior to negotiations with NYSDOL, to ensure coordination and collaboration between the LWDBs.

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## Public Comment

- a. Describe the process used by the region to provide a period of no more than 30 days for public comment and input into development of the plan by representatives of business, labor organizations, and education prior to submission.

As per NYSDOL Technical Advisory 17-8, there is a public comment period of no more than 30 days. There are electronic mailings to all partners, Center Staff, HMO Workforce Development Board Members and FMS Workforce Development Board Members, and Chief Elected Officials indicating that the Regional Plan has been posted on the HMO Workforce Development Board website and the FMS Workforce Development Board website for public review and comment. Legal notices are published in local newspapers and an announcement of posting is published on the HMO Workforce Development Board Facebook page and the FMS Workforce Development Board Facebook page. In addition to being available electronically, a paper copy of the Local Plan is available to view at the various One-Stop Centers.

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