

Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency

Administration provided by Ithaca Area Economic Development

Labor Committee

11 Dec 2020 – Via Zoom

Present: Anne Koreman, Martha Robertson, Jennifer Tavares, Tim Logue, Heather McDaniel, Kurt Anderson, Rich John (IDA Chair), Deborah Dawson, Ellie Pfeffer

1. CaSE Green Workforce Report Discussion

Deborah Dawson introduced the report as well as the process and timeline behind its creation. She cited the need to address two priorities: (1) Incentivize an economic recovery and (2) Create quality, forward-looking, family-sustaining jobs, and that it will require the work of many agencies, not just the IDA. Ellie Pfeffer then presented a report overview, outlining the goals of continuing to make green jobs local and utilize local labor, especially journeymen and apprentices as cost-saving measures. Although it was not clear in the report or from its title, it is a work in progress and being amended following feedback from legislative committees and others.

Martha agreed that finding money for green jobs training is important (NYPA being one potential source), and Rich shared that deconstruction and biofuel farming should be among those quality opportunities. Rich also called for a more comprehensive and coordinated pipeline, and that others were needed to achieve the goals outlined in the report. All agreed that the report will need support from a variety of entities, and that the IDA is just one lever to enact change.

Members of the committee then had a chance to respond. Jennifer cited concerns about formation of the CaSE board (and lack of workforce or economic development representation) and the surprise rollout of the report without IDA involvement. Martha expressed her confusion as to why a draft report would be presented to a legislative committee. In these ways, the report was confusing and filled with communication breakdowns.

Heather reminded Deborah and Ellie and the committee that her goal is to improve delivery of IDA programs. Local labor is a complicated issue, to which she offered a history of the policy's implementation and subsequent formation of the labor committee to revisit the data and revise the policy if necessary. Broad recommendations would have been better than specific, targeted objectives. Rich agreed with Heather, reminding the authors not to make recommendations with incomplete data. Data is still being evaluated, and along with interviews of interested parties (e.g. developers and trades unions), will help inform the committee what is possible.

2. Neighboring IDA catchment areas and policies comparison

Kurt shared overview of neighboring IDA's and their catchment areas, local labor requirements, number of "big three" tradespeople (i.e. carpenters, electricians, plumbers) therein, and their respective proportions of the total workforce. After some comparison of "Employed in" and "Residing in" definitions, the committee agreed the latter was more useful in determining labor availability.

Key takeaways:

- TCIDA's catchment area (Tompkins and adjoining counties) includes the fewest number of tradespeople (1,000 fewer than its closest neighbor, Chemung County IDA) and a lower proportion of the total workforce than any other nearby IDA.
- Several counties included in the TCIDA catchment area are also included in other IDA's, especially Onondaga and Syracuse.

There were further questions about whether the other IDA's actually achieve their objectives, and if not, how many or what size waivers or other exceptions were employed. Heather offered to make contact with her IDA counterparts and report back to the committee to help inform what is ideal vs. actual.

3. Data updates

Kurt presented updated data on Harold's Square, to which the Pre-LeChase data had been included since the last labor committee meeting in October. Other data was presented that directly corresponded to the workforce report, including journeyman/apprentice and other trades (i.e. non-"big three"), including operators, roofers, ironworkers, insulators, glaziers, drywall finishers, painters, masons, and sheet metal workers. The group decided to wait on a review of electricians and carpenters due to time constraints.

Key takeaways:

- By including Pre-LeChase data, local labor usage fell from approx. 67% to 55%, likely because the first-wave workers include trades not well-represented in the TCIDA catchment area.
- Other trades constituted a very low proportion of total labor on Organic Nature (2.2%), City Centre (3.2%), and Harold's Square (3.0%) projects. They also used local labor at rates (Organic Nature, 40.4%; City Centre, 28.0%; Harold's Square, 42.8%) much lower than project averages.
- Across projects, journeymen represented 16.9% of total labor and used 50.5% local. Apprentices represented 10.4% of total labor and used 80.8% local. For both classes, the hourly rate for local workers was \$5 less than non-local, the inverse of other, more advanced worker levels.

4. Summary of interviews

Kurt presented a summary of interviews conducted with three developers and electrical and carpenter trade union representatives. Among developers, there was general concern about instituting a specific local labor percentage, as that is largely outside their control. They cited issues meeting M/WBE goals and soliciting bids that can both satisfy size, time, and budget considerations as well as local labor requirements. Representatives of electrical and carpenter trade unions both independently identified an overall labor percentage of 75% as adequate. All expressed appreciation for personalized data overview and the opportunity to participate.

5. Next steps

- Kurt will collate local labor from previously completed solar projects.
- Heather will inquire about incentives and deliverables in other IDA's and report back to the committee.