

Workforce Analysis of the Optics & Imaging Cluster in the Finger Lakes Economic Development District September 2000

Introduction

Industry clusters are generally defined as interrelated industries and firms that have similar operational, technical, labor, and other resource needs and produce goods or services that may compete with or have strong alliances to each other and are concentrated geographically. Empire State Development Corporation (ESD), New York State's economic development agency, has used a cluster strategy to focus efforts on firms that interact with each other based on buyer-supplier relationships, shared technology, perceived membership in a common set of industries, and/or (as in this case) a common workforce in the State's economic development districts (EDDs). The clusters identified throughout New York State are "basic" or "traded"; that is these groups of industries as a whole export goods and services bringing out-of-area spending to an EDD.

Through a grant from the US Economic Development Administration, ESD and their consultant Regional Technology Strategies, Inc. (RTS) collaborated with the New York State Association of Regional Councils (NYSARC) to administer a survey requesting information on workforce development trends, issues, and priorities in the primary clusters of the State's EDDs. For the Genesee/Finger Lakes Region, the optics and imaging cluster was chosen given the high location quotient (LQ)¹ of firms engaged in these industries in the EDD.

The following analysis includes a brief discussion of the survey methodology used to gather information on the cluster's workforce, the results of the returned surveys, and significant trends or priorities identified through the survey responses. For a full report on workforce and training trends (including the survey responses and further quantitative and qualitative analysis) in the optics and imaging cluster in the Finger Lakes EDD and other clusters throughout New York State refer to RTS's *Building Skilled Workforces for New York's Regional Economies*.

Methodology

The Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (G/FLRPC) sent a three-page survey containing fourteen questions on employment and training to firms in the optics and imaging cluster as identified by ESD and received 21 completed surveys. The individual industries that make up the optics and imaging cluster are presented along with their corresponding Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code in Table 1.

¹ Location quotients are coefficients used to determine the amount of representation a particular industry or set of industries has in a region. Essentially, location quotients are the ratio of a variable (usually jobs) in an industry against the total number of the variable in an area compared to ratio of the same variable for a reference area (usually the nation or a state). A location quotient above one (1) represents a higher representation of a particular industry or set of industries in the region compared to the reference area.