

WORKPLACE WELL-BEING: A REAL STRATEGY TO INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY

REPORTING RESULTS FROM SURVEY OF
SOUTHERN TIER NY BUSINESS LEADERS





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In December 2021 through February 2022, The CREST Team*, in partnership with Organizational Wellness and Learning Systems (OWLS), launched a brief, anonymous survey on workplace leader perceptions of health and well-being needs. The survey covered multiple counties across Central New York and the Southern Tier reaching 238 respondents; approximately 124 completed key areas for reporting in this white paper. This convenience sample provides an initial snapshot for future planning purposes.

The purpose of the following white paper is to showcase the existing attitudes of Southern Tier employers towards the practices of workplace wellness, with a strong focus on employee's mental health. It also compares the perceived wellness needs of employees within and outside the Southern Tier Region.**

Respondents answered questions regarding the impact of employee health on productivity and financial losses. Results indicate that Southern Tier counties were less likely to have well-being programs in place compared to other NY counties.

"Many thanks to the engaged business owners and Organizational Wellness Learning Systems for offering a genuine perspective of our employer concerns."

- Jen Gregory
Executive Director, Southern Tier
8 Regional Board

The number one requested program is Manager Training on Stress. Most importantly, employers on average spend 39% of their time dealing with the impacts of employee health, namely stress, burn-out, and mental health issues.

Survey results clearly show that for profit, nonprofit, and government agencies have a strong need to prioritize the wellbeing of the individual for the benefit of their surrounding communities and the greater economy.

"To build a vibrant economy, you first need a healthy community. By centering wellness in the workplace, Southern Tier employers will be better equipped to address their employee needs and increase the health and productivity of their organizations."

- Stacey Duncan
CEO, Leadership Alliance

*CREST (Collaborative Recovery Empowerment of the Southern Tier) is a regional workforce development program in the Southern Tier NY Region. CREST Partners Include: Southern Tier 8 Regional Board, the Leadership Alliance (Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce & The Agency), Commerce Chenango, The Family & Children's Society, The Council (Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County), Broome-Tioga Workforce, LEAF (Leatherstocking Education on Alcoholism/Addictions Foundation), and Kowalik & Associates

**Southern Tier Region: Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Tioga and Tompkins Counties

***Funding provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission & the US Commerce Economic Development Administration

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Across the Southern Tier, employers are voicing their concerns regarding their inability to hire and maintain a quality staff. As of February 2022, across the 8 counties, there are nearly 11,000 unemployed individuals eligible for employment (NYSDOL 2022). There are thousands of open positions and a near equivalent number of unemployed individuals looking for work. We are facing a significant gap in our workforce development framework. It is time to ask workplace leaders what they think and what they need.



Each year every New York State county receives a health ranking. For the past four years, the Southern Tier has maintained an average ranking of 32 out of 62.*

ACROSS THE SOUTHERN TIER
11,800 UNEMPLOYED
5% OF POPULATION UNINSURED

REGIONAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:
\$55,175

NYS MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$72,000

OVER THE COURSE OF AN AVERAGE MONTH, EMPLOYEES TAKE:

Southern Tier Region	New York State
4 Physical Health Days	3.6 Physical Health Days
5 Mental Health Days	3.6 Mental Health Days

Problems of employee health and well-being have long been overlooked as private concerns, only to be addressed outside of the workplace. Business owners and organizational leaders in the private and public sectors alike, however, are now increasingly faced with stressors associated with the pandemic.

Employers continue to report issues of staffing shortages, increase in alcohol & drug use, and high rates of turnover and absenteeism related to employee stress and mental health. There is a growing need to shift our perspective on the role of the workplace in community health and to promote a culture of care for the workforce.

A key to success of preventative programs requires getting leadership input. In partnership with Organizational Wellness Learning Systems (OWLS), CREST surveyed Southern Tier NY Workplace Leaders, asking what kind of wellness practices they have in place, and what they most need. Broadly speaking, the survey asked:

- How much have employee mental health concerns caused lost productivity?
- Are there differences between the Southern Tier and other regions in Central NY?
- Is there an interest in addressing employee Opioid and Rx misuse?

*County Health Ranking Data Provided by University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's Annual County Health Ranking Report: countyhealthrankings.org/reports/county-health-rankings-reports

DATA & METHODS

Workplace leaders within Central NY counties are often not included in survey assessments because many of them are in hard-to-reach rural settings and in small businesses. The survey sampling was based on convenience and snowball methods. Notifications were sent to members of several different Chambers of Commerce throughout the region including Rochester, Binghamton, and Delaware County. The survey was also distributed through CREST staff, with the use of LinkedIn and Facebook ads, and via prevention providers throughout the Southern Tier Region, Monroe County, and surrounding counties. The anonymous survey was comprised of 25 questions and took, on average, 8 minutes to complete. A total of 238 respondents began the survey and 150 completed key areas for results reported in this document. The majority of industries represented were health care, social services, education, and public administration. Southern Tier respondents were more likely to come from smaller organizations and be top level executives.

KEY FINDINGS:



At least 50% reported financial losses due to well-being concerns.

Respondents rated productivity/financial losses due to employee health concerns. Across all regions, employee stress and burn out, mental health, and fatigue issues were primary concerns. Over 50% reporting these as a moderate and high concern.



Leaders are losing precious time dealing with these concerns.

Respondents reported losing approximately 39% of their time to these health concerns. On average, lost time was slightly greater in other New York counties outside of the Southern Tier.



Southern Tier workplaces are significantly less likely to have programs that address concerns.

Respondents indicated whether they had nine types of wellbeing programs in place. There were regional differences. Specifically, 73% of respondents from other NY counties provide at least one program, while only 47% of Southern Tier respondents offered any of the programs listed.



Southern Tier workplace leaders report needing training to help managers deal with their own stress.

Respondents also selected their top choices for wellbeing programs. Southern Tier respondents preferred manager stress training and soft skills development equally (23%). Other NYS respondents preferred coaching or counseling for depression or stress (31%).



40% of all respondents value programs that could address Rx/Prescription Drug or Opioid Misuse.

After ranking their top 3 preferences for wellbeing programs, respondents were also asked how important it was to have a strategy for preventing Prescription Drug or Opioid Misuse. Across all counties, 40% felt it was of equal importance.

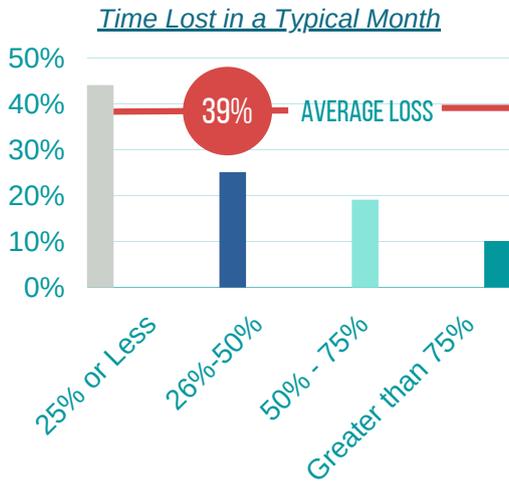


Many respondents saw benefit in educating employees on healthy alternatives.

Respondents were provided a list of eight (8) possible programs for prevention of Rx and Opioid misuse. The top choice was to provide and promote interactive educational programming on empowering employees to be more health conscious and find healthy alternatives for dealing with pain, anxiety, sleep, energy, or other issues.

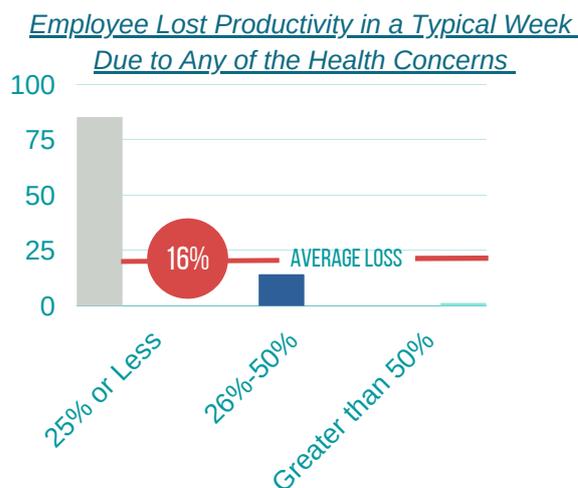
REPORTS OF PRODUCTIVITY LOSS & WELL-BEING CONCERNS

LOST TIME AT WORK DUE TO EMPLOYEE HEALTH CONCERNS:



Respondents reported on how much time they lose in a typical month dealing with the six health concerns identified: employee stress & burn-out, mental health, general health, sleep and fatigue, alcohol misuse, and other drug use issues. On average, respondents reported losing approximately 39% of their time. On average, lost time was slightly greater in New York counties outside of the Southern Tier Region.

- 44% of respondents lost as much as 25% of their time
- 25% of respondents lost as much as 50% of their time
- 19% of respondents lost as much as 75% of their time
- 12% of respondents lost greater than 75% of their time

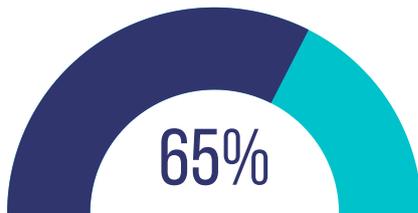


Respondents reported on lost weekly productivity they perceived as due to employee stress & burn-out, mental health, general health, sleep and fatigue, alcohol misuse, and other drug use issues. On average, respondents reported approximately 16% lost productivity per week. There were no significant differences between the Southern Tier and other New York Counties.

- 85% of respondents report less than 25% lost productivity
- 14% of respondents report as much as 50% lost productivity
- 1% of respondents report greater than 50% lost productivity

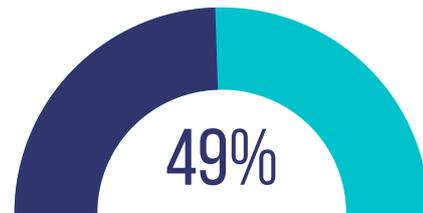
IMPACTS ON FINANCIAL HEALTH & ORGANIZATION PRODUCTIVITY:

65% of Southern Tier Business Leaders Indicated that Employee Stress & Burnout were a cause for productivity & financial concerns. Other impacts on financial health and productivity for Southern Tier Business Leaders include Employee Mental Health Concerns (49%), Lack of Sleep & Fatigue (43%), and Lack of General Health (41%). These rates are comparable with the rest of Central NYS respondents.



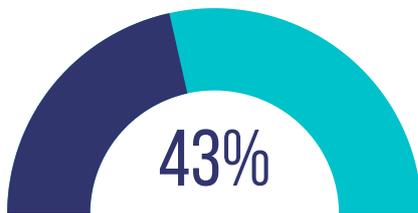
Employee Stress & Burnout

Of this percentage of Southern Tier Business Leaders, 37% said it was a Moderate Cause while 28% indicated Employee Stress & Burnout was a Large or Very Large cause for financial concern.



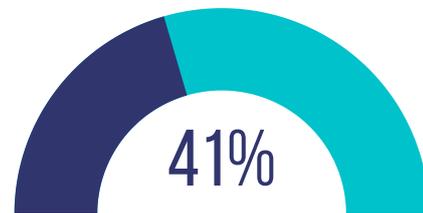
Employee Mental Health

Of this percentage of Southern Tier Business Leaders, 34% said it was a Moderate Cause while 15% indicated Employee Mental Health as a Large or Very Large cause for financial concern.



Lack of Sleep & Fatigue

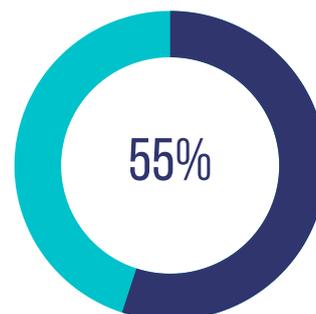
Of this percentage of Southern Tier Business Leaders, 20% said it was a Moderate Cause while 23% indicated Lack of Sleep & Fatigue was a Large or Very Large cause for financial concern.



Lack of General Health

Of this percentage of Southern Tier Business Leaders, 31% said it was a Moderate Cause while 10% indicated Lack of General Health was a Large or Very Large cause for financial concern.

Of the 6 health concerns identified by the Survey (Employee Stress & Burnout, Employee Mental Health, Lack of Sleep & Fatigue, Lack of General Health, Employee Alcohol Misuse, & Other Drug Use), 55% of Southern Tier Business Leaders reported having 4 or more of the 6 concerns.

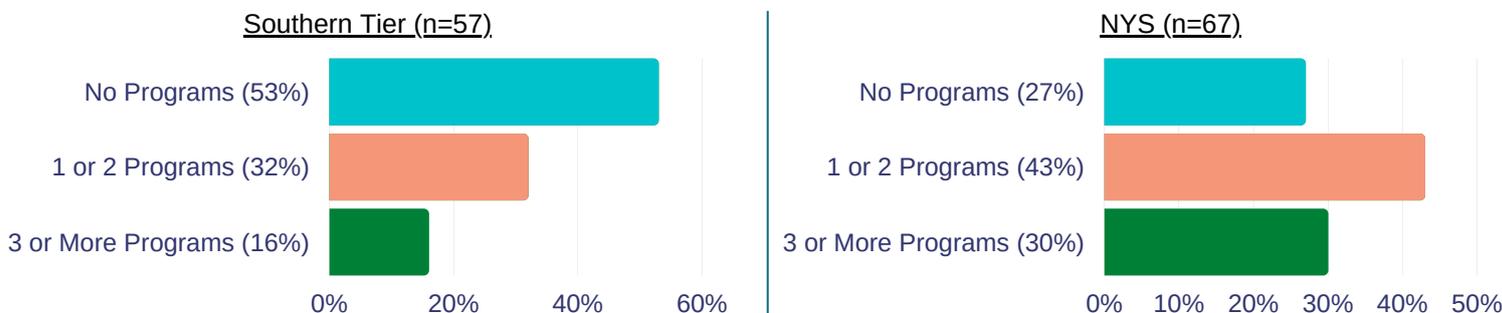


Southern Tier Respondents with 4+ Concerns

CURRENT & DESIRED WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

The Southern Tier Region strongly lacks in workplace wellness programming as compared to our peers across New York State. Workplace wellness programming is critical to addressing the impacts of employee well-being on an organization's financial health as highlighted in the survey responses from Southern Tier business leaders.

NUMBER OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS CURRENTLY OFFERED:

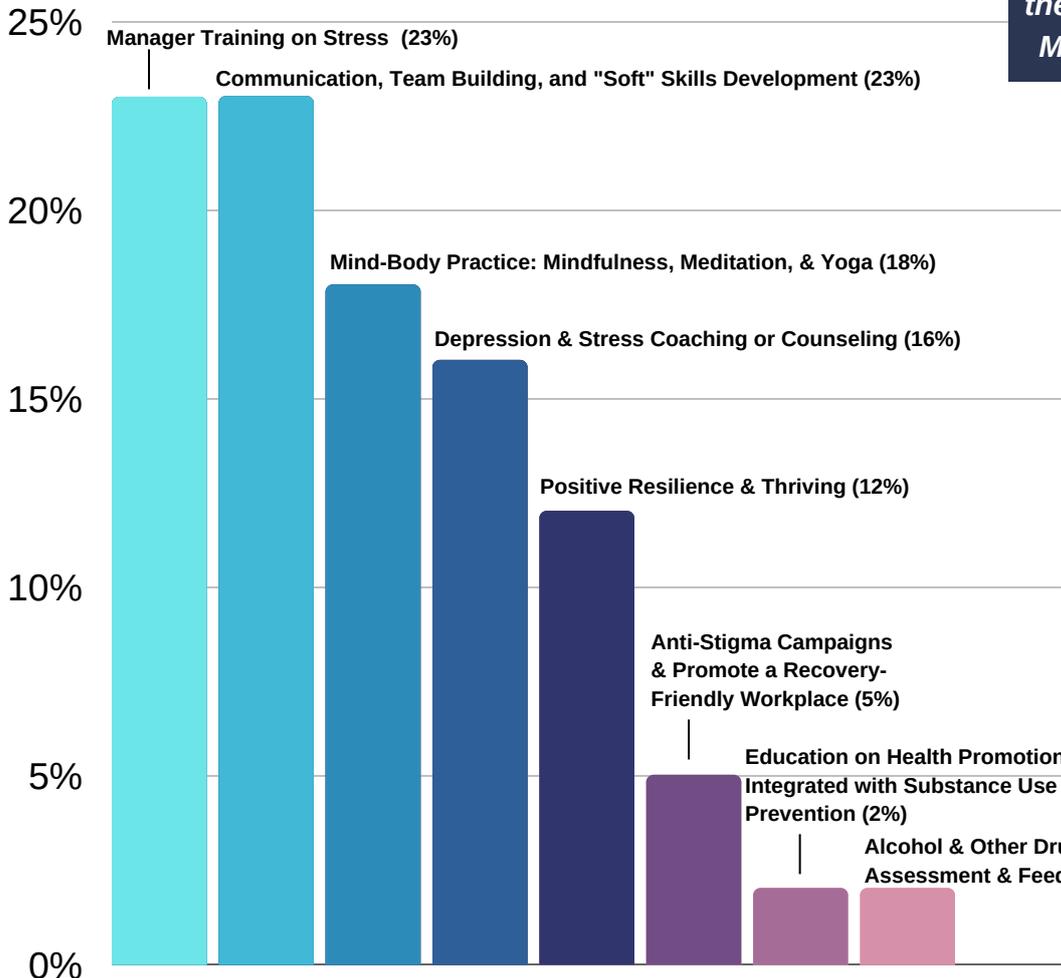


Respondents indicated whether they had each of the following nine programs:

1. Depression and stress coaching or counseling;
2. Manager training on stress;
3. Positive resilience and thriving;
4. Mind-body practice: mindfulness, meditation, yoga;
5. Alcohol and other drug use assessment and feedback;
6. Education on health promotion integrated with substance use prevention;
7. Education on sleep habits and sleep disorders;
8. Anti-stigma campaigns and promote a recovery-friendly workplace;
9. Communication, team building, and "soft skills" development.

There were differences across regions. Specifically, while 73% of other NY counties had at least one program in place, the percentage for Southern Tier counties was only 47%.

DESIRED PROGRAMMING IN SOUTHERN TIER 8 REGION:



The #1 Requested Program in the Southern Tier Region was Manager Training on Stress

Top choice for desired programs varied between the Southern Tier Region and other NYS Counties. Overall, when combining the top three program choices across the Southern Tier Region and NYS as a whole, Training on Soft Skills, Positive Resilience and Thriving, & Manager Stress received the most endorsements, followed by Counseling for Stress and Depression.

NEXT STEPS

Survey results indicate that employers across New York State and the Southern Tier Region recognize the impacts that individual employee well-being have on the financial health & productivity of their organizations. However, they require more training and resources to fully embrace the practice of workplace wellness. Similarly, during interviews and focus groups conducted with major area employers, Southern Tier Business leaders voiced their concerns surrounding the lack of wellness resources for their employees, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring new uncertainties regarding employee health needs.

"Business owners often lament 'I'm too busy to stop and sharpen the saw because I got to cut this tree down.' But the rewards are great when any leader stops to promote wellness. We start a ripple effect that lifts the economic well-being of the entire community."

– Ray Pucci, President
Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

"COVID has added stress for everyone, and we can all adapt and grow. Well-being is 24/7; it's about community, having a sense of purpose, and stepping in to help. Wellness applies beyond our own self. When for-profit and nonprofit leaders support employees they contribute to the surrounding community as a whole."

– Diane Cohen, Executive Director &
Co-founder of Finger Lakes ReUse, Inc

In the months ahead, the CREST Team will be partnering with other organizations to provide regional programming on workplace wellness. To better educate area organizations on the importance of and business case for prioritizing employee wellness, employers across the Southern Tier region are encouraged to attend future Workplace Wellness programming including Lunch & Learn webinars on topics such as Compassionate Business and key staff trainings, such as the Manager Stress Training, the number one requested program by Southern Tier 8 employers.

Local employers, however, should not wait for these future programs to begin implementing workplace well-being practices. If you are interested in workplace wellness resources and/or have question on how to implement compassionate business practices, contact one of the CREST Partners listed on the next page.

Chamber of Commerce Partners

- Leadership Alliance (Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce & Broome County IDA/LDC)
 - 5 South College Drive Suite 101 Binghamton, NY 13905
 - 607.772.8860
 - www.greaterbinghamtonchamber.com/
- Commerce Chenango
 - 15 S Broad St Norwich, NY 13815
 - 607.344.1400
 - www.commercechenango.com/

Workforce Partners

- Broome Tioga Workforce
 - Broome County Location: 501 Reynolds Rd, Johnson City, NY 13790
 - Tioga County Location: 1062 State Route 38, Owego NY 13827
 - Broome County Phone Number: 607.778.2136
 - Tioga County Phone Number: 607.687.8500
 - www.broometiogaworks.com

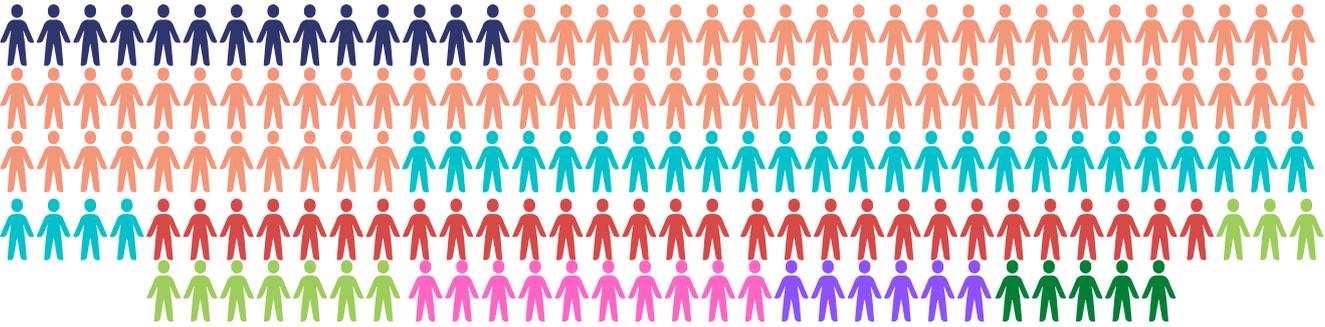
Service Provider Partners

- Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County (The Council)
 - 201 East Green Street Suite 500 Ithaca, NY 14850
 - 607.274.6288
 - www.alcoholdrugcouncil.org
- Family & Children's Society
 - 257 Main Street Binghamton, NY 13905
 - 607.729.6206
 - www.familycs.org/
- Leatherstocking Education on Alcoholism/Addictions Foundation (LEAF)
 - 189 Main Street Suite 101 Oneonta, NY 13820
 - 607.432.0090
 - www.leafinc.org/

Administrative Partners

- Southern Tier 8 Regional Board (Project Lead)
 - 49 Court St #222 Binghamton, NY 13901
 - 607.724.1327
 - www.southerntier8.org
- Kowalik & Associates
 - 3521 Gorton Road Corning, NY 14830
 - 607.759.5285
 - Tom.Kowalik77@gmail.com

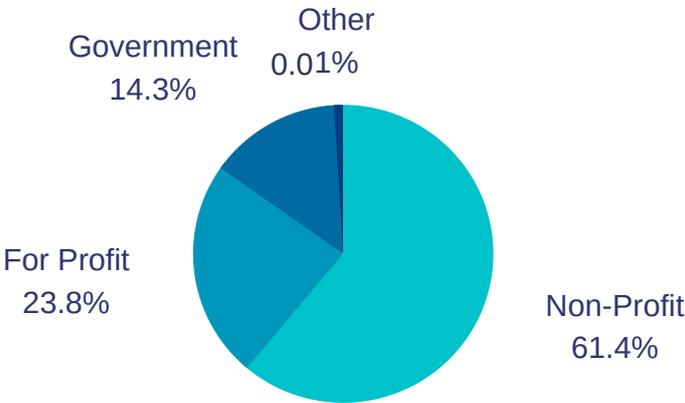
RESPONDENT INDUSTRY:



- OTHER (14)
- HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (69)
- EDUCATIONAL SERVICES (29)
- PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (29)
- MANUFACTURING (10)
- CONSTRUCTION (10)
- PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL SERVICES (6)
- ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, & RECREATION (5)

Southern Tier Counties and NY were similar in terms of industry type, although, there was greater representation of Health Care & Social Assistance in other NY counties (43%) than in the Southern Tier (24%)

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION:



ORGANIZATION SIZE (TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING WORKPLACES):



Southern Tier Counties showed a greater representation of micro (1-10) and small (11-49) businesses at 62% of all 89 respondents as compared to just 39% for other NY Counties



SOUTHERN TIER 8

ACTIVE REGIONAL NOW



SUPPORT PROVIDED BY APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION & US COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION



Appalachian Regional Commission



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Office of Addiction Services and Supports

REPORT PREPARED BY THE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

