



## **For Immediate Release**

**Date:** September 21, 2018

**Contact:** Audrey Schwartzberg, ANCA Communications Associate, (518) 891-6200 or [aschwartzberg@adirondack.org](mailto:aschwartzberg@adirondack.org)

### **Regional economic analysis and investment options revealed at ANCA annual meeting** *Study will shape economic development projects in the North Country*

SARANAC LAKE - About 100 community leaders gathered at the Hotel Saranac on Friday for the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) annual meeting to take part in “the big reveal” of data and findings from a new economic analysis of the North Country region.

ANCA collaborated with 11 area nonprofit, academic and corporate partners to conduct the study in order to identify opportunities for job growth and business expansion, make recommendations to leverage regional strengths, and use the research to guide critical investments by foundations, nonprofits and other entities driving economic development in the region.

The group of partners employed the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, a leader in the field of rural economic development, to conduct the research and analysis. The study took place over a one-year period during 2017 and 2018.

“Many of us whose work focuses on growing local economies, revitalizing downtowns and protecting our natural and cultural assets felt we needed more information to guide our work,” said ANCA Executive Director Kate Fish. “We wanted to have a data-driven analysis to help focus where we need to be investing our collective resources and where the highest priority opportunities are for turning around our local and regional economies.”

Three opportunities emerged from the analysis as top potential areas for growth: tourism, manufacturing and an agriculture sector that features local foods and value-added products. The study revealed that these three focus areas are most likely to succeed in communities that support existing businesses and new entrepreneurs, as well as natural resource conservation.

The study found while that the population in the region overall is growing, with some variation from county to county, the North Country is losing its 20- to 34-year-olds. Retaining and attracting this cohort is foundational to improving demographic diversity, increasing workforce availability and stimulating economic growth.

Strategies to attract this age group focus on quality of life and “placemaking”—where young people and families can experience vibrant and livable communities with strong connections to the surrounding area. Central to the concept of placemaking is the development of niche or “crafted” manufacturing—a responsive manufacturing industry that focuses on small-run, customized and place-based goods produced by local makers. Examples include the growing areas of craft beverage manufacturing and value-added local food products.

“Adirondack Foundation was happy to help support this analysis because of the value it has for shaping the work needed in our region and the work of our partners,” said Adirondack Foundation President and CEO Cali Brooks. “The Adirondack region is a special place in terms of natural beauty, tourism potential and high quality of life. We wanted to dig deeper into the best and most effective ways to attract people to the area and help our communities thrive. This report will help us do that.”

Data and recommendations from the analysis are already being used by regional organizations. Findings related to the so-called “silver tsunami”—the potential loss of over 10,000 North Country businesses due to the retirement of Baby Boomers—directly informed the development of ANCA’s newest program, [The North Country Center for Businesses in Transition](#), which is due to open later this year.

On July 26th, the Center received a jumpstart from a \$248,364 grant awarded by the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC). The program will assist retiring business owners as well as aspiring entrepreneurs in successfully sustaining local businesses for the benefit of their communities and future generations. The Center, which will collaborate closely with partner organizations, will be based out of ANCA’s Saranac Lake office and use its “circuit rider” model to reach interested businesses throughout the region.

Findings from the study also helped in the development of the Mohawk Valley Community College “[thINCubator](#),” a makerspace that provides a meeting location for presentations and workshops as well as co-working space for students, freelancers and entrepreneurs. The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, one of the foundation partners for the thINCubator project, is also one of the funding partners for the regional economic analysis.

“We wanted to support this analysis knowing that it would be extremely helpful in shaping the way The Community Foundation supports projects and programs to stimulate economic growth and community vitality in Herkimer and Oneida Counties,” said Alicia Dicks, President and CEO of the foundation. “The thINCubator responds to some of the gaps that were identified in the regional study. We believe that by supporting local makers and entrepreneurs, we are promoting a more diverse and appealing business landscape that will benefit all who live and work here.”

US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D), who spoke at the ANCA office in May to voice her support of the Main Street Employee Ownership Act and ANCA’s Center for Businesses in Transition, is also eager to have the economic analysis at her disposal.

“The entire North Country is teeming with hardworking, talented men and women who have great ideas about new businesses, new technologies and new factories. We all know how important these investments would be for the North Country, and I’m very pleased that we now have good new data to support us,” said Senator Gillibrand. “I’m always proud to fight for good jobs in the North Country, and I will continue doing everything I can to make sure our communities in the region have every opportunity to succeed.”

Funding organizations for the economic analysis include ANCA, Adirondack Foundation, the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, National Grid, Adirondack Council, Clarkson University, Farm Credit East, Paul Smith’s College, St. Lawrence University, SUNY Canton and SUNY Potsdam.

[ANCA](#) is an independent nonprofit organization growing the New Economy in northern New York. Using an integrated approach to sustainable economic development and prosperity where economic health, community vitality and ecological stewardship are equally important outcomes, ANCA focuses on creating opportunity for people with diverse backgrounds, experience and education levels.

###