



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
2025 Annual Performance Progress Report



RESOLUTION NUMBER FY2026-002

RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHEAST OHIO FOUR COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (NEFCO) GENERAL POLICY BOARD ADOPTING AND AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF THE *COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) 2025 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT* TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

WHEREAS, the NEFCO region is undergoing significant changes in the structure of its economy; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), has designated the NEFCO region as an Economic Development District based on the incidence of unemployment rates and the existence of the CEDS; and

WHEREAS, the NEFCO General Policy Board in conjunction with its 124 local units of government has formulated a regional economic development strategy entitled the *2023-2028 CEDS*; and

WHEREAS, the EDA requires the submittal of the *CEDS 2025 Annual Performance Progress Report* by October 30, 2025 to maintain NEFCO's Economic Development District designation and the region's eligibility for EDA funding; and

WHEREAS, communities in the Counties of Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne have participated in the formulation of the CEDS; and

WHEREAS, the Regional CEDS Committee has provided input on the *CEDS 2025 Annual Performance Progress Report*.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NEFCO General Policy Board adopts the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025 Annual Performance Progress Report*, its goals, strategies, and action items, and authorizes the submission of the report to the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Certified as action taken by the NEFCO
General Policy Board at its regular meeting
of October 15, 2025

David Maley, Secretary
NEFCO General Policy Board



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Acknowledgements

The Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization staff thanks the General Policy Board and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee for their assistance in the completion of this report.

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Introduction

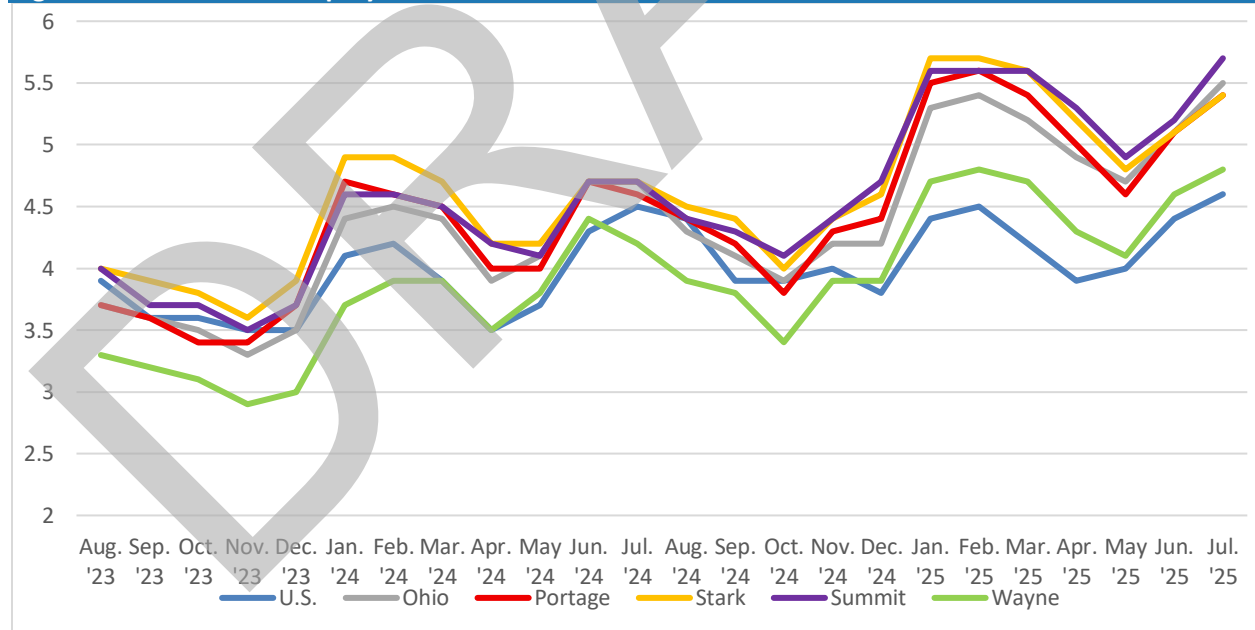
The 2025 Annual Performance Progress Report (APPR) period of performance spans from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025. This APPR includes a regional overview with current regional economic distress data; an organizational overview including the NEFCO staff and General Policy Board and Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee rosters; a review of the accomplishments in technical assistance in the last 12 months, program outreach and project development highlights; a description of adjustments made to the CEDS and NEFCO strategies; an evaluation of the CEDS goals; and a schedule for goals, program activities, and NEFCO strategies for the upcoming 12 months (FFY2026).

Regional Overview

24-month Unemployment and Per Capita Income in the NEFCO Region

The 24-month unemployment rate pattern for the four NEFCO counties shows seasonal jumps in unemployment occurring each January and June, as well as a general upward trend during this period (see Figure 1). The 24-month period spans between August 2023 and July 2025; data are provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The region's unemployment rates match the trend experienced by Ohio and the U.S. Wayne County consistently had the lowest unemployment rates throughout the 24-month period. Summit County generally had the highest unemployment rate among the NEFCO counties.

Figure 1: 24-Month Unemployment Rates for NEFCO Counties

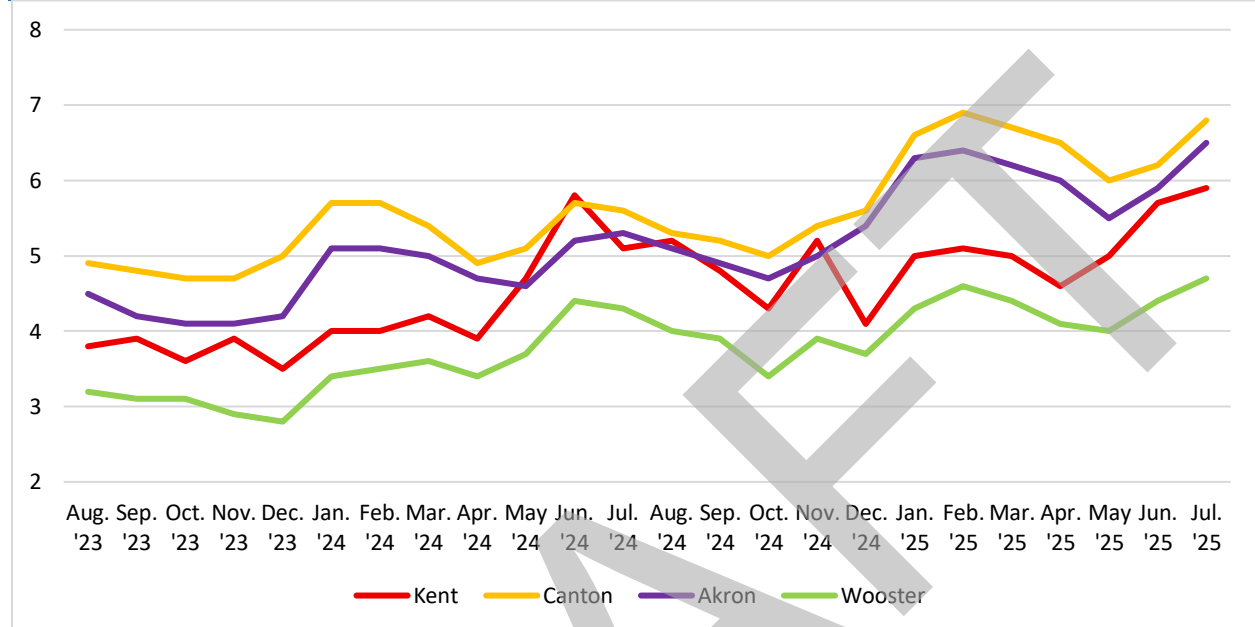


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2025

Figure 2 illustrates the unemployment rates over the last 24 months for the NEFCO member cities. The patterns are generally consistent with Figure 1. The most noticeable pattern is that Wooster and Kent consistently had lower unemployment rates than Akron and Canton. Additionally, the cities' monthly unemployment rate mirrors that of their respective counties, as seen in Figure 1. Wayne County and

Portage County had lower unemployment rates than Stark County and Summit County. This pattern may be reflected in the employment sectors of each county. For instance, Wayne has the lowest percentage of retail and service-related jobs, which continue to experience workforce shortages.

Figure 2: 24-Month Unemployment Rates for NEFCO Member Cities



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2025

Local governments may qualify for EDA assistance based on the economic distress of a census tract or a community's per capita median income (PCMI). A community can qualify as economically distressed either by its PCMI or unemployment rate. A community's PCMI must be 80 percent or less than the U.S. PCMI (\$43,289) or have a 24-month unemployment rate one percent or greater than the national average of 4.01 percent (in period ending July 2025). The PCMI data is derived from the most recent U.S. Census Bureau 2023 American Community Survey Five-Year estimate (2019-2023); these data are updated annually. The 24-month unemployment rate is dynamic, updated monthly by the BLS; the rate accounts for the last 24 months and is constantly changing accordingly. The 24-month period for this report includes unemployment data between August 2023 and July 2025.

Table 1 displays calculations of economic distress for counties and select cities and villages in the NEFCO region. City and county names in bold denote economically distressed communities per EDA metrics. Cells without data indicate that statistics are not provided at this geographic level by the BLS. In Portage County, the municipalities of Hiram, Kent, Mantua, Ravenna, and Windham have PCMI levels less than 80 percent of the national average. In Stark County, the municipalities of Alliance, Beach City, Brewster, Canton, East Canton, East Sparta, Massillon, Minerva, Waynesburg, and Wilmot have PCMI levels less than 80 percent of the U.S.; Canton has a 24-month unemployment rate of 5.6 percent, which is also a qualifying metric. In Summit County, the municipalities of Akron, Barberton, Lakemore, and Northfield have per capita income levels less than 80% of the U.S. Akron and Barberton also have distressed levels of unemployment at 5.17 percent and 5.48 percent, respectively. In Wayne County, the municipalities of Apple Creek, Congress, Creston, Fredericksburg, Marshallville, Orrville, Rittman, Shreve, West Salem, and Wooster have a PCMI level below 80 percent of the national average. Also, the PCMI of Wayne County is \$33,874, which is 78.25 percent of the national average.



Table 1: Economic Distress in the NEFCO Region

Unit of Government	24-mo. Unemployment Rate (BLS)*	PCMI (ACS 5-yr. est.: 2019-2023)	Percentage of U.S. PCMI
Portage County	4.44%	\$39,041	90.19%
Village of Hiram	N/A	\$24,722	57.11%
City of Kent	4.60%	\$28,307	65.39%
Village of Mantua	N/A	\$33,608	77.64%
City of Ravenna	N/A	\$30,564	70.60%
Village of Windham	N/A	\$19,506	45.06%
Stark County	4.62%	\$35,802	82.70%
City of Alliance	N/A	\$26,632	61.52%
Village of Beach City	N/A	\$31,567	72.92%
Village of Brewster	N/A	\$29,823	68.89%
City of Canton	5.60%	\$23,490	54.26%
Village of East Canton	N/A	\$33,629	77.68%
Village of East Sparta	N/A	\$27,752	64.11%
City of Massillon	4.35%	\$30,379	70.18%
Village of Minerva	N/A	\$33,780	78.03%
Village of Waynesburg	N/A	\$23,430	54.12%
Village of Wilmot	N/A	\$25,948	59.94%
Summit County	4.58%	\$42,749	98.75%
City of Akron	5.17%	\$29,763	68.75%
City of Barberton	5.48%	\$31,567	72.92%
Village of Lakemore	N/A	\$31,677	73.18%
Village of Northfield	N/A	\$32,145	74.26%
Wayne County	3.91%	\$33,874	78.25%
Village of Apple Creek	N/A	\$30,297	69.99%
Village of Congress	N/A	\$31,294	72.29%
Village of Creston	N/A	\$29,780	68.79%
Village of Fredericksburg	N/A	\$30,222	69.81%
Village of Marshallville	N/A	\$28,784	66.49%
City of Orrville	N/A	\$31,366	72.46%
City of Rittman	N/A	\$33,992	78.52%
Village of Shreve	N/A	\$33,559	77.52%
Village of West Salem	N/A	\$32,241	74.48%
City of Wooster	3.78%	\$33,270	76.86%
NEFCO region	4.51%	\$39,194	90.54%
Ohio	4.36%	\$39,455	91.14%
United States	4.01%	\$43,289	-

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 24-month Average (August 2023-July 2025); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates Data Profiles (2019-2023); StatsAmerica

N/A – not available; statistics not provided at this geographic level

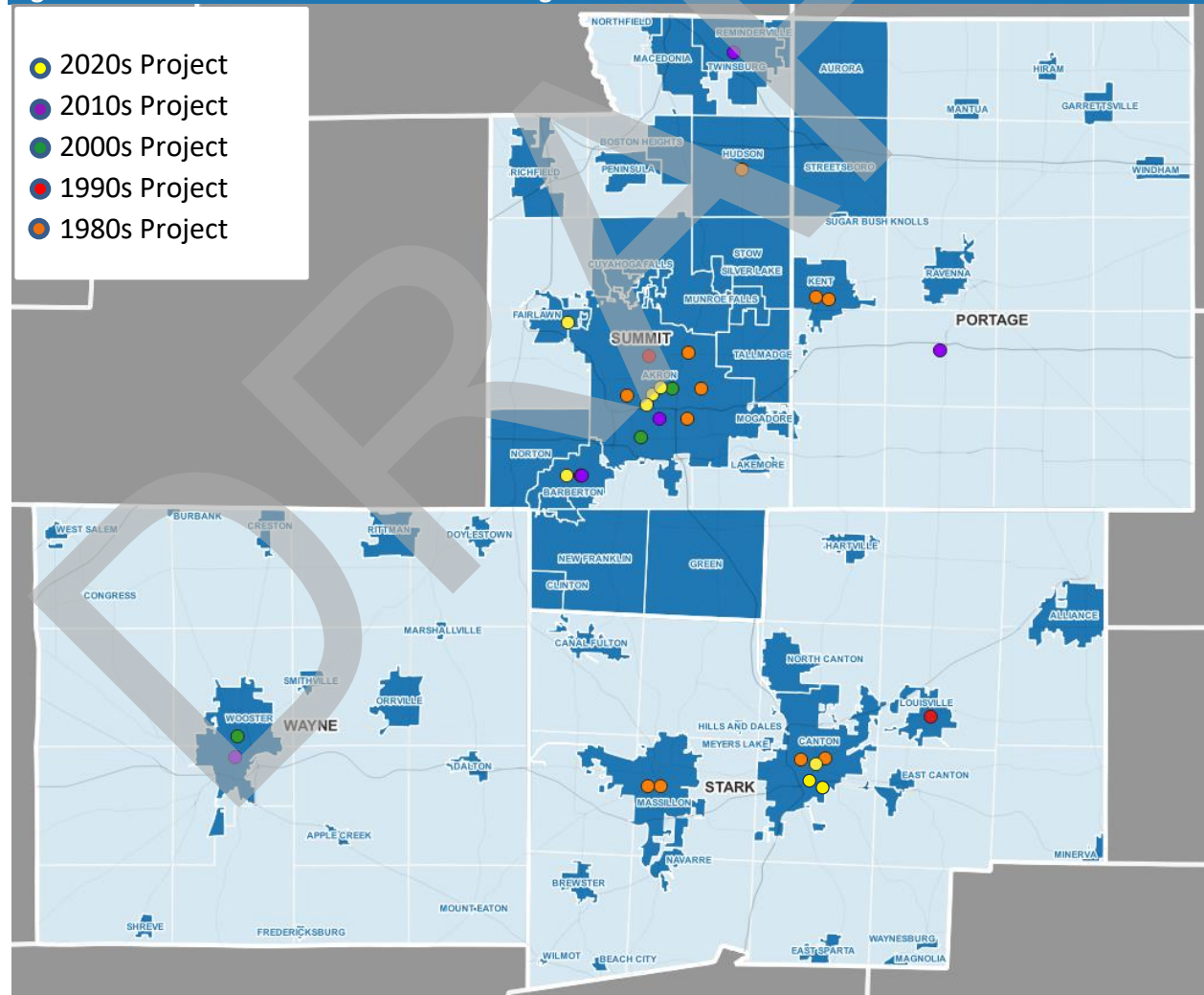
*BLS unemployment rates not seasonally adjusted

Organizational Overview

Staff Capacity

NEFCO's Program Manager for Economic Development Planning manages the agency's economic development planning program and CEDS planning process. Two other full-time staff members assist with the economic development planning program, including the NEFCO Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. The economic development planning program focuses on the CEDS planning process, working collaboratively with communities in the four-county region on project development, and providing technical assistance and authoritative recommendations to communities and organizations around the region with projects, funding opportunities, and grant applications, particularly EDA grant projects. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of EDA grant monies invested in the NEFCO region since 1980. As part of the CEDS, staff also works on the implementation of regional business, workforce development and entrepreneurship, and community development strategies identified in the Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan, and developing a Regional Benchmarking Report to analyze

Figure 3: Past EDA Grant Awards in NEFCO Region



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration



regional competitiveness.

General Policy Board

Table 2 shows the composition and affiliations of the NEFCO General Policy Board. NEFCO's governing board is the decision-making body for the organization. The General Policy Board is broadly representative of the principal environmental and economic interests of the region. There are 40 members from the counties of Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne and the cities of Akron, Canton, Kent, and Wooster. Membership composition is determined by the organization's bylaws. The cities of Canton, Kent, and Wooster each have one member; the City of Akron has seven; Wayne County has three members; Portage County has six; Summit County has nine members; and Stark County has twelve members. Member counties and cities have the appointing authority for all their respective members.

Table 2: NEFCO General Policy Board

Name	Affiliation	Type
Portage County		
Amos Sarfo	Stormwater Program Supervisor, Soil and Water Conservation District	Public Sector
Becky Lehman	Portage County Health Commissioner	Public Sector
Sabrina Christian-Bennett	County Commissioner	Public Sector
Todd Peetz	Director, Portage County Regional Planning Commission	Public Sector
Daniel Blakely	Director, Portage County Water Resources	Public Sector
Rochelle Hartigan	Citizen, Portage County Appointee	
City of Kent		
Kailyn Cyrus	Development Planner	Public Sector
Stark County		
Keith Bennett	County Engineer	Public Sector
David Maley	Planning and Development Director, City of Louisville	Public Sector
Kirt Conrad	CEO/Executive Director, Stark Area Regional Transit Authority	Public Sector
Pete Wearstler	Planning Director, City of Alliance	Public Sector
Richard Regula	County Commissioner	Public Sector
Jim Troike	County Sanitary Engineer	Public Sector
Bob Nau	Director, Stark County Regional Planning Commission	Public Sector
Alfredo Carranza	Building Contractor, Stark County Appointee	Private Sector
Dan Moeglin	Executive Director, Stark Parks	Public Sector
Joe Race	Building Industry Association of Stark County	Public Sector
Michael Naso	Economic Development Services Coordinator, Stark Economic Development Board	Private Sector
Ted Herncane	Economic Development Director, City of Massillon	Public Sector
City of Canton		
Doug Harris	City Engineer	Public Sector
Summit County		
Alan Brubaker	County Engineer	Public Sector
James Balogh	Twinsburg Township Trustee	Public Sector
Sam Scaffide	Mayor, City of Twinsburg	Public Sector
David Kohlmeier	CTI Engineering	Private Sector

Name	Affiliation	Type
Summit County (continued)		
Caitlin Elrad	Economic Development Coordinator, Department of Community & Economic Development	Public Sector
Ilene Shapiro	County Executive	Public Sector
Dianne Sumego	dms water solutions, llc.	Private Sector
Michael Vinay	Sanitary Sewer Services Director	Public Sector
James Taylor	Department of Community & Economic Development/GIS	Public Sector
City of Akron		
Shammas Malik	Mayor	Public Sector
Tina Boyes	Council Member	Public Sector
Chris Ludle	Deputy Director Public Service	Public Sector
Helen Tomic	Comprehensive Planning Manager	Public Sector
Margo Sommerville	Council Member	Public Sector
Kyle Julien	Director of Planning	Public Sector
Jan Davis	Council Member	Public Sector
Wayne County		
Matt Martin	County Commissioner	Public Sector
Jenn Kiper	Planning Director	Public Sector
Steve Wheeler	Safety/Service Director, City of Orrville	Public Sector
City of Wooster		
Robert Reynolds	Mayor	Public Sector
Ohio EPA (Ex Officio)		
David Emerman	Chief, Northeast District Office	Public Sector

Regional CEDS Committee

The Regional CEDS Committee includes representatives from the NEFCO's four counties and largest city in each of the counties, private sector representatives from the various county economic development boards, a university representative, and a representative from a nonprofit venture development organization (see Table 3). The Regional CEDS Committee is representative of the region's principal economic interests and drives the CEDS planning process.

Table 3: Regional CEDS Committee

Name	Representing	Title	EDA Category
Brian Gwin	Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center	Program Coordinator	Higher Education
Alyssa Carpenter	Greater Akron Chamber	Vice President, Economic Development	Private Sector
Brad Ehrhart	Portage Development Board	President	Private Sector
Matt Riehl	JumpStart, Inc.	Director of Government Relations	Private Sector
Stephen MacKenzie	Stark Economic Development Board	President	Private Sector
Jonathan Millea	City of Wooster	Development Coordinator	Public Sector



Name	Representing	Title	EDA Category
Robert Nau	Stark County Regional Planning Commission	Executive Director	Public Sector
Maribeth Burns	Wayne Economic Development Council	President	Private Sector
Caitlin Elrad	Summit County Dept. of Community and Economic Development	Economic Development Coordinator	Public Sector
Scott Wagner	Barberton Community Development Corp.	Executive Director	Private Sector
Jenn Kiper	Wayne County Planning Department	Director	Public Sector
Vacant	City of Akron		Public Sector
Eric Helmstedter	City of Kent	Economic Development Director	Public Sector
Todd Peetz	Portage County Regional Planning Commission	Director	Public Sector
Peter Swahirsky	City of Canton	Economic Development Director	Public Sector

The Regional CEDS Committee represents the principal economic interests of the NEFCO region. Note: some updates or changes to this list may occur.

The Regional CEDS Committee is advisory to the NEFCO General Policy Board. The Regional CEDS Committee and General Policy Board participate in the agency's regional economic development planning program, directing the planning strategy, providing economic development updates, and assessing the progress of the region in implementing the CEDS.

Accomplishments – Technical Assistance

Planning and Implementation Assistance

NEFCO provided significant technical assistance on project development over the period of performance. Staff assisted area officials, community leaders, and professionals with various projects of importance to local communities. Over the past 12 months, NEFCO met with and assisted many communities and organizations on funding opportunities and grant applications. NEFCO provided technical assistance, authoritative recommendations on projects and EDA grant applications, and letters of support to communities and organizations around the region for projects that advance the goals and objectives of the NEFCO CEDS. NEFCO staff worked closely with EDA grant applicants to improve the competitiveness of applications and ensure projects meet EDA investment priorities. Staff also served as a liaison between prospective applicants and the EDA, coordinating meetings with EDA staff and providing technical assistance on federal notices of funding opportunity.

NEFCO provided technical assistance and letters of support to the following communities and organizations for projects between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025:

- City of Cuyahoga Falls: Ohio Department of Transportation Action Transportation Plan Development Assistance program application

- City of Canton: EDA Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance grant application for Canton Workforce Hub Project
- Barberton Community Foundation: EDA Local Technical Assistance Grant, Polymer Workforce Center
- Greater Akron Chamber: EDA Good Jobs Challenge for Advanced Polymer and Manufacturing Excellence (APEX) initiative
- Bounce Innovation Hub: EDA Build to Scale grant application for Synthe6 Accelerator Program
- City of Wooster: U.S. Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant for Downtown Wooster E. Liberty Street Streetscape project

The NEFCO region received two EDA grant awards in 2025 (see Table 4). The Greater Akron Chamber (GAC), in partnership with ConxusNEO, Manufacturing Works, MAGNET, Stark State College, University of Akron, community-based organizations, and diverse regional employers, was awarded an EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant in the amount of \$3,084,371 for the Advanced Polymer and Manufacturing Experience (APEX) project. APEX was one of only eight projects nationwide to receive funding in the latest round of the Good Jobs Challenge program. APEX will create accessible career pathways in the polymer sector and will leverage the work of the Polymer Industry Cluster, which includes employers, educational institutions, industry labs, and community and labor organizations, to design and implement sector strategies for training and placing workers in good jobs. The project will support the growth and development of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub, which EDA designated as a Tech Hub in 2023. The project is utilizing a two-pronged approach: (1) an entry-level strategy to bring new, underrepresented and un- and underemployed individuals – including women, people of color, and justice-impacted jobseekers – into the advanced manufacturing sector; and (2) an incumbent worker advancement component to upskill manufacturing and polymer employees. The entry-level strategy includes recruitment, job readiness bootcamps, technical training, support services and career coaching. The incumbent worker advancement component includes the development of curriculum to address training gaps in the polymer industry, including degrees and short-term training for industry credentials. The goal of the initiative is to recruit 550 individuals, help 450 complete entry-level or upskilling, and place at least 320 individuals into good jobs in the polymer and advanced manufacturing sectors.

The Barberton Community Foundation was awarded an \$80,400 EDA Local Technical Assistance grant to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study for establishing advanced manufacturing workforce training opportunities in Barberton. The study will examine the development of a multi-component training system designed to address critical skills gaps in advanced manufacturing while supporting local and regional economic revitalization. The results of the study will define the growing demand for skilled workers in polymer technology, defense and energy manufacturing, and other advanced manufacturing sectors. The feasibility study will specifically explore three core areas of workforce development: Advanced Manufacturing Training: Exploring a purpose-built facility providing specialized training for precision manufacturing, welding engineering, and advanced manufacturing processes; Polymer Technology Careers: Training workers in advanced materials manufacturing and polymer science applications; and AI and Advanced Materials Innovation: Developing workforce capabilities in artificial intelligence applications for materials science, predictive manufacturing, and smart manufacturing systems. The study will analyze market demand (including national, regional, and local unmet workforce development needs), infrastructure requirements, financial sustainability, and implementation timelines. Upon completion, the findings will inform applications for construction and implementation



funding to establish the facilities required to sustainably conduct comprehensive workforce training programs.

Table 4: 2025 EDA Grant Awards for NEFCO Region

Awardee	Project	EDA Grant Program	Award
Greater Akron Chamber	Advanced Polymer and Manufacturing Experience (APEX) Project	Good Jobs Challenge	\$3,084,371
Barberton Community Foundation	Polymer Workforce Center Feasibility Study	Local Technical Assistance	\$80,400

Accomplishments – Program Outreach

Updates and Communication

Each month, NEFCO staff communicates funding opportunities and provides updates to its members on issues that affect the region. NEFCO's monthly General Policy Board meetings provide a forum for this communication. Time-sensitive information on new initiatives and other information are emailed to economic development professionals. NEFCO utilizes its website to communicate public events, important meetings, and dates of the General Policy Board, Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee and Regional CEDS Committee meetings. NEFCO also maintains an active funding opportunities page on its website, which includes numerous programs in seven different categories: broadband and telecommunications, brownfields and environmental remediation, community development and planning, parks and recreation, public works and economic development, transportation, and water quality and conservation. General Policy Board meetings also occasionally feature speakers on topics selected by staff and/or requested by Board members. The NEFCO *Forum* newsletter provides additional information and key updates on regional environmental and economic development planning activities. NEFCO issued newsletters in November 2024 and March 2025.

NEFCO staff provides information to the public and private sectors on critical issues affecting the region, including Census data updates, federal and state legislative updates, and funding notices. NEFCO's administration of two U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-funded brownfields assessment grants has made the agency a critical resource for brownfields redevelopment planning. Additionally, staff's close relationship with the U.S. EPA and the Ohio EPA allows NEFCO to assist its members in obtaining quick answers to questions on environmental issues.

Involvement on Regional Committees

During 2024-2025, NEFCO's Executive Director continued to serve as a member of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).¹ Additionally, the Executive Director serves as a member of the Summit County District 8 Public Works Integrating Committee TAC, which recommends public infrastructure projects for funding through the Ohio Public Works Commission.²

¹ Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, <https://www.amatsplanning.org/>

² County of Summit, District 8 Public Works Integrating Committee, <https://co.summitoh.net/committee-pages/District-8-Public-Works-Integrating-Committee.html>

Since 2010, NEFCO has participated in a 12-county study to examine the effects of various future land use development patterns. A vision framework and list of recommendations were adopted in 2014 by the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium Board of Directors. Since that time, a Launch Board was formed and convenes quarterly meetings to advance the plan, Vibrant NEO 2040.³ NEFCO's Executive Director serves as the 2nd Vice Chair. NEFCO staff also serves on the Vibrant NEO Champions awards committee. Champion Awards recognize organizations and individuals demonstrating exceptional leadership in the advancement of the Vibrant NEO Vision. The Executive Director also serves as a non-voting member of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) and Vibrant NEO Brownfields Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is tasked to make revolving loan fund recommendations to the Vibrant NEO and NOACA Boards of Directors. The Steering Committee reviews applications submitted for RLF loans and subgrants; conducts all standard due diligence normally undertaken by lending entities; drafts loan and subgrant agreements, including determination of loan or subgrant, dollar amount, interest rate, and payback period, subject to Vibrant NEO and NOACA approval; and recommends projects to the Vibrant NEO and NOACA Boards of Directors or their appropriate committees, based on the criteria developed by Vibrant NEO.

Economic Resilience

The NEFCO [2023-2028 CEDS](#) incorporates the [Economic Recovery and Resilience \(ER&R\) Plan](#), which was funded by an EDA CARES Act grant. The ER&R Plan is fully integrated into the CEDS and includes Community Development, Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship, and Regional Business strategies. In 2024, staff worked on addressing strategies recommended in the ER&R Plan; staff will continue to work on implementing these strategies in 2025.

NEFCO's Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee holds ongoing discussions on various environmental issues. NEFCO is also a member of Summit County's District 8 Technical Advisory Committee, which reviews and recommends projects for funding by the Ohio Public Works Commission. Climate change and its impact on existing and planned infrastructure has been a discussion among the county's city engineers.

NEFCO Region Economic Development Conditions

Staff reviews five area newspapers daily to stay current with economic development news and changes in the region. Significant closures (generally job losses of 100 or greater) were reported to the Ohio Economic Development Representative, and, when appropriate, meetings are requested to discuss projects that will assist a community with efforts to address economic challenges. Major closures that occurred during the period of performance included JoAnn Distribution Center and JoAnn Stores Support Center, Inc. in Hudson (1,021 jobs), Charter Communications in Akron (259 jobs), Trilogy Plastics in Alliance (153 jobs), Morgan Truck Body in Orrville (110 jobs), Essendant in Twinsburg (99 jobs), P. Graham Dunn, Inc. in Dalton (92 jobs), Metalco USA, LLC in Canton (71 jobs), and PPC Flexible Packaging, LLC in Alliance (68 jobs). Significant positive economic development stories were also noted.

Adjustments to CEDS and NEFCO strategies

The 2023-2028 CEDS includes eight goals, one which was added in 2024: support the growth and development of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub. No new goals have been added for the next 12

³ Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, Vibrant NEO 2040, <http://vibrantneo.org/vibrantneo-2040/vneo-2040-full-report/>



months. NEFCO staff, the Regional CEDS Committee, and the General Policy Board will continue to work on implementing strategies to further the existing eight goals.

A major goal and focus for NEFCO in the next 12 months will be the completion of the Regional Benchmarking Report. The CEDS planning process will include reaching out to peer regions highlighted in the report, particularly the high-performing regions, to identify best practices that have contributed to regional economic success. NEFCO will work to identify these best practices and encourage the implementation of strategies in the NEFCO region.

Evaluation of Progress on CEDS Goals

The following evaluation details the progress made by NEFCO since October 1, 2024 for the eight goals included in the [2023-2028 CEDS](#). The evaluation includes accomplishments made by staff relative to each goal, challenges the organization has faced in addressing goals, an explanation on how NEFCO anticipates overcoming these challenges, and a status indicator. It should be noted, progress made on the various goals by other organizations in the NEFCO region are not included in this evaluation.

2023-2028 CEDS PLAN GOALS

- 1 Address the supply chain and promote domestic production
- 2 Support programs that build human capital
- 3 Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters
- 4 Promote redevelopment of blighted, underused, vacant, and environmentally challenged sites
- 5 Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing
- 6 Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies
- 7 Develop benchmarking to evaluate region's progress and competitiveness
- 8 Support the growth and development of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub

Goal 1: Address the supply chain and promote domestic production

- A. Analyze supply chain issues and opportunities for the region's targeted industrial sectors
- B. Support policies and programs that encourage domestic/regional production
- C. Support programming and partnerships designed to support small businesses engaged in supply chain and production
- D. Support tech and tech-enabled startups that support and/or enhance supply chain and domestic production

NEFCO Highlight:



Provided a letter of support for Bounce Innovation Hub Foundation EDA Build to Scale grant application for Synthe6 Accelerator Program

Addressing the supply chain and promoting domestic production is an overarching goal of all the counties and communities in the NEFCO Region. NEFCO's role in this goal is providing technical assistance to communities and organizations on funding opportunities.

CHALLENGES

Challenges with the supply chain are sometimes difficult to address from a regional or local perspective. One challenge is understanding the supply chain shortages and how they impact local businesses. The regional economic development partners continue to encourage domestic production and support small businesses, entrepreneurs, and startups. NEFCO needs to work more closely with its partners and communities to better understand how it can respond to these challenges as the regional organization. As a forum of elected officials from communities across the four counties, NEFCO can help communicate challenges to economic development partners and identify partnership opportunities. NEFCO can also communicate the various needs and challenges facing regional industrial sectors with its counties and communities.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

Goal 2: Support programs that build human capital

- A. Support the continued growth and success of programs that train/develop workers and entrepreneurs
- B. Support programs and initiatives to improve upskilling and employee retention
- C. Support efforts and programs aimed at retaining local college and high school graduates with the NEFCO region
- D. Expand technical and vocational training opportunities
- E. Support programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

NEFCO Highlights:



Provided technical assistance and a letter of support for Greater Akron Chamber EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant application

Workforce development factors remain the top challenges facing the region's economy. Businesses continue to struggle to find workers. Childcare and transportation access have affected labor force participation. The region must find ways to eliminate barriers to employment and address the essential wraparound services to lure additional individuals into the workforce. Companies should consider providing flexible schedules, paid training, and other attractive benefits to be competitive.

As the polymer industry sector has continued to grow in the NEFCO region, community and business leaders have worked to address the need for the talent that will be necessary for the growth of the industry. The region received two EDA grants to help respond to the need for workforce development in polymers and polymer related careers.

NEFCO provided technical assistance and a letter of support for the Greater Akron Chamber's EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant application for the Advanced Polymer and Manufacturing Excellence (APEX) initiative. The GAC and its partners – ConxusNEO, Manufacturing Works, MAGNET, Stark State College, the University of Akron, community-based organizations, and diverse regional employers were awarded a nearly \$3.1 million Good Jobs Challenge grant to support sector partnerships throughout the region that bring together businesses, education and training, and partners to design and deliver workforce programs and services that train and place individuals in good jobs. The project will support the growth and development of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub by placing over 300 individuals into good jobs in the polymer and advanced manufacturing sectors.

CHALLENGES

As noted earlier, workforce development is the top challenge facing the NEFCO region. NEFCO will continue to assist communities and workforce development organizations with funding opportunities and work on addressing some of the NEFCO ER&R Plan Workforce Development Strategies. NEFCO should engage communities and organizations in the region and foster partnerships with the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub Governance Team to help address workforce demands of the polymer cluster and identify solutions.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

Goal 3: Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters

- A. Support projects that contribute toward strengthening the region's targeted industries
- B. Support activities that complement targeted and other existing industries in the region
- C. Capitalize on and expand existing regional industrial clusters (e.g., polymers, chemicals, plastics, etc.)
- D. Encourage and support the development of speculative industrial buildings and properties
- E. Provide support and funding to the local universities for development and research for the identified industry clusters
- F. Support programming and partnerships focused on ensuring innovation and inclusion across Northeast Ohio's economic clusters, resulting in diversified, future-proof industries

NEFCO Highlight:



Provided technical assistance to the Barberton Community Foundation in the development of its EDA Local Technical Assistance grant application

NEFCO provided technical assistance and a letter of support to the Barberton Community Foundation (BCF) for its EDA Local Technical Assistance (LTA) grant application for the Polymer Workforce Center Feasibility Study. The BCF was awarded an \$80,400 EDA LTA grant in September 2025. The PWC would be an advanced educational training and workforce development center to help build a pipeline of skilled workers in polymer-related careers. The funding will be used to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study, which will include a market study of existing workforce development programs in the polymer sector. The study will identify potential operators capable of managing and administering the PWC. The feasibility study will also identify polymer-related career pathways, provide a gap analysis of

existing programs to the employment needs of the polymer sector, develop programming for the physical space, and identify necessary equipment for the PWC.

Polymers have emerged as a principal industry sector in the region. The region has among the highest concentration of polymer companies in the world. The University of Akron has the top-ranked polymer science and polymer engineering program in the world.⁴ The Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub project illustrates a strong public-private partnership between local governments, nonprofit economic development organizations, universities, industry, philanthropic organizations, and others. The cluster is focused on capitalizing on the region's concentration of resources, polymer companies, and collaborative spirit.⁵ The EDA Tech Hub Designation provides the opportunity for Greater Akron to leverage its regional assets – such as the largest concentration of plastics and rubber manufacturing plants, machines, and materials in North America – as well as regional partnerships in research and development and an inclusive regional workforce, to pursue catalytic funding, which would establish the region as the global epicenter for these advanced materials. The Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub aims to tackle the severe climate and environmental impacts resulting from the use of fossil fuel-derived polymers through accelerating sustainable polymer manufacturing and commercialization in the U.S.

CHALLENGES

There are a number of strong public-private partnerships within the region. All counties work closely with their respective private-sector, nonprofit economic development organization: Portage Development Board, Stark Economic Development Board, Greater Akron Chamber, and Wayne Economic Development Council. Elevate Greater Akron (EGA) is a strategic and inclusive economic development partnership between the City of Akron, Summit County, and the Greater Akron Chamber.⁶ EGA is a regional economic development plan that involves collaboration and support from business, community, non-profit and civic leaders. EGA focuses on supporting small and mid-sized business growth, inclusion and opportunity, workforce talent development, downtown and job hub development, innovation, and high potential startups, and leveraging resources to support business growth. The Wayne Economic Development Council collaborates with Wayne County and the cities of Wooster, Orrville, and Rittman to attract business growth. Strengthening Stark – a collaboration between the Stark Economic Development Board, the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Stark Community Foundation, and communities in Stark County – is a community, economic, and social development plan for Stark County.⁷ NEFCO must continue to work to strengthen its collaboration with these organizations. Staff will look to have semi-annual meetings with each of these organizations to share ideas and provide technical assistance or support where desired.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

⁴ The University of Akron, <https://www.uakron.edu/polymer/>

⁵ Polymer Industry Cluster, <https://greaterakronchamber.org/economic-development/polymer-industry-cluster/>

⁶ Elevate Greater Akron, <https://elevategreaterakron.org/>

⁷ Stark Community Foundation, Strengthening Stark, <https://www.starkcf.org/files/publications/strengtheningstark2017-lowres.pdf>

Goal 4: Promote the redevelopment of blighted, underused, or vacant, and environmentally challenged sites with high market potential

- A. Encourage counties and local governments to identify sites for brownfield assessments and cleanups
- B. Redevelop/reuse vacant industrial sites for economic use
- C. Encourage programs that support and pursue state and federal brownfields grant programs
- D. Work with county land banks to divest of vacant properties that have not been utilized within a certain timeframe
- E. Designate priority areas for development

NEFCO Highlights:

	Participated on the Vibrant NEO Brownfields RLF Steering Committee
	Informed the region about brownfields-related funding opportunities

As mentioned earlier, NEFCO is an active member of Vibrant NEO, a consortium of governments and organizations, focused on creating a more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable Northeast Ohio.⁸ The Executive Director serves as a non-voting member of the NOACA-Vibrant NEO Brownfields Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is tasked to make revolving loan fund recommendations to the Vibrant NEO and NOACA Boards of Directors. The Steering Committee reviews applications submitted for RLF loans and subgrants; conducts all standard due diligence normally undertaken by lending entities; drafts loan and subgrant agreements, including determination of loan or subgrant, dollar amount, interest rate, and payback period, subject to Vibrant NEO and NOACA approval; and recommends projects to the Vibrant NEO and NOACA Boards of Directors or their appropriate committees, based on the criteria developed by Vibrant NEO. Staff also serves on the Vibrant NEO Champion Awards committee, which recommends recognition of individuals and projects that demonstrate leadership in the advancement of Vibrant NEO themes.

CHALLENGES

The Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne County land reutilization corporations (land banks) have been aggressive in demolition, eliminating blight, and preparing properties for redevelopment. Each has capitalized on Ohio Department of Development brownfields funding for demolition, remediation and site revitalization. Cities in the region, particularly Akron and Canton, have also been active in addressing brownfields sites. There remains an abundance of brownfield sites across the NEFCO region. It's often challenging to identify and inventory these sites, though, particularly if they are privately owned. NEFCO will need to determine how best to incorporate these brownfields redevelopment strategies into its CEDS and what role the organization will serve in brownfields planning.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

⁸ Vibrant NEO, <https://vibrantneo.org/>

Goal 5: Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing

- A. Support efforts to bring affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the NEFCO region
- B. Expand transportation options that enhance employment and educational opportunities, particularly for economically disadvantaged populations
- C. Support projects that encourage land use policies that improve and promote bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure
- D. Support projects that encourage land use policies that promote affordable housing
- E. Invest in sustainable, multimodal transportation infrastructure
- F. Invest in efforts to build new, affordable housing

NEFCO Highlights:

	Provided letter of support for City of Wooster USDOT RAISE grant application
	Provided letter of support for City of Cuyahoga Falls ODOT Active Transportation Plan Development Assistance grant application

NEFCO provided a letter of support to the City of Wooster for its Downtown Wooster Streetscape project. Wooster is seeking \$475,000 in funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. The funding would enable the City to complete Preliminary Engineering and National Environmental Policy Act activities for the streetscape improvements to East Liberty Street in Downtown Wooster. The project aligns with NEFCO's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, which aims to build a strong, resilient regional economy, foster effective transportation access, and support projects that contribute toward strengthening the region's targeted industries. This project will continue the City's progress in implementing improvements to Downtown Wooster and aligns with several RAISE program goals, including promoting projects that improve safety, enhancing community connectivity, promoting pedestrian and bicycling mobility, improving tourism, and fostering a vibrant downtown. The project also improves equity, as the majority of this project is located in a Census tract that is both Historically Disadvantaged and an Area of Persistent Poverty.

NEFCO provided a letter of support to the City of Cuyahoga Falls its Ohio Department of Transportation Active Transportation Plan Development Assistance application. The City has requested assistance to prepare an Active Transportation Plan to improve the city's pedestrian and bicycle network. While the Active Transportation Plan will be for the entire city, it will focus on areas lacking connectivity and where significant gaps exist in the pedestrian-bicycle network, particularly the northwest portion of the city. The Plan will address bike and pedestrian connections to Woodridge Local Schools; connections between residential developments, commercial districts, and older parts of Cuyahoga Falls; and connections to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The Active Transportation Plan would advance the NEFCO CEDS goal of encouraging investment in infrastructure, particularly sustainable, multimodal transportation infrastructure. The Active Transportation Plan would support the expansion of transportation options that enhance educational opportunities and promote the development of trails

and sidewalks to provide safe and reliable alternatives for bikes and pedestrians, while reducing vehicular traffic.

CHALLENGES

Affordable housing continues to be a major issue for the region, as it is throughout the nation. Communities must continue to work with organizations and developers to produce more affordable housing options. The recently completed housing studies in the region identify key factors contributing to and provide recommendations for addressing the housing stock shortage. NEFCO will need to determine how best to incorporate these housing strategies into its CEDS and what role the organization will serve in developing solutions. NEFCO should work with its members to determine if there's value in developing a regional, four-county housing plan/strategy as part of the CEDS.

Staff will also continue to work with the three transit authorities and two metropolitan planning organizations on implementing transit-oriented development and active transportation strategies, respectively, as recommended in the NEFCO Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

Goal 6: Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies

- A. Encourage programs and projects that create and retain jobs
- B. Support efforts that will make the region more globally competitive
- C. Support entrepreneurial and technological development
- D. Improve access to capital for regional businesses in equitable manner

Each of the four NEFCO counties and major cities has a business retention and business expansion (BRE) program. The BRE programs include annual visits to major and medium-sized companies to analyze business needs, offer support, and discuss available resources and incentives. The BRE programs are key to retaining existing jobs and ensuring companies remain in the NEFCO region. The four nonprofit economic development organizations – Portage Development Board (PDB), Stark Economic Development Board (SEDB), Greater Akron Chamber (GAC), and Wayne Economic Development Council (WEDC) – work closely with communities in their respective counties to create and retain jobs. The Canton and Akron areas have robust community and economic development planning programs: Strengthening Stark and Elevate Greater Akron.

NEFCO continues to support entrepreneurial development. In December 2024, the Bounce Innovation Hub opened its expanded Generator space on the second floor, adding 15,000 square feet of coworking areas, private offices, and state-of-the-art meeting rooms to meet growing demand from the Greater Akron area.⁹ The project was funded by a \$2 million EDA grant, with match funding from the City of Akron, Summit County, Burton D. Morgan Foundation, and the GAR Foundation. The project features modern amenities including 10 new private offices, four additional conference rooms, two new classrooms, six phone booths, four huddle rooms, and ample workspace to fit the needs of a diverse group of startups and entrepreneurs.

⁹ Bounce Innovation Hub, 2024 Annual Report, <https://bouncehub.org/impact>

CHALLENGES

NEFCO needs to make a more concerted effort of meeting regularly with staff of the GAC, SEDB, PDB, and WEDC to understand challenges, help develop solutions, and provide technical assistance and support with funding opportunities.

STATUS: NEED TO ADDRESS

Goal 7: Develop benchmarking to evaluate region's progress and competitiveness

- A. Analyze data to establish benchmark
- B. Review and adopt best practices from other regions
- C. Better understand positive and negative factors impacting region's competitiveness
- D. Assess regional equity
- E. Develop metrics to evaluate regional progress

NEFCO Highlights:

	Completed draft of 2025 Regional Benchmarking Report
	Serving on the NADO Research Foundation Advisory Committee

The Regional CEDS Committee met on September 9, 2025 to review a draft of the 2025 Regional Benchmarking Report. The report is a recommendation of the Regional CEDS Committee and is a goal of the 2023-2028 CEDS. The benchmarking report evaluates key metrics and statistics – performance indicators – that offer insight into the region's economic picture. The report compares the NEFCO region with 14 peer regions across the Midwest region of the United States using performance indicators in seven data categories: population, prosperity, productivity, housing, talent, innovation, and employment and industry. Like a traditional SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, the benchmarking report will be used to better understand the positive and negative factors impacting the region's competitiveness, identify areas of concern, and formulate strategies to target economic weaknesses. By comparing the NEFCO region with other peer regions, NEFCO staff, the General Policy Board, Regional CEDS Committee, and communities and organizations in the NEFCO region can formulate targeted strategies to improve the region's economic outlook. NEFCO can utilize the benchmarking report to identify regions that are performing better in particular areas. NEFCO can then take a deeper dive into the best practices these regions are employing that might better explain their successes. Staff anticipates having a revised draft of the report for review by the NEFCO General Policy Board in October and will seek approval of the report at the October 15th GPB meeting.

NEFCO is a member of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), which offers member organizations a wealth of information and resources on funding, planning and development news, best practices, and updates from other regional development organizations (RDOs). NEFCO's Program Manager for Economic Development Planning serves on the NADO Research Foundation (RF) Advisory Committee, representing the Midwest Region. The Advisory Committee works with RF leadership and staff to identify issues and topics of relevance and concern to NADO members; provides

guidance and offers ideas related to research and training programs and opportunities to serve the membership; and shares their individual and collective professional expertise and in-depth knowledge of regional approaches to economic development. Through this committee assignment, staff hopes to collaborate with regional development organizations across the United States and share back best practices, particularly in regions where economic growth outpaces that of the NEFCO region. As an active member of NADO, NEFCO has reached out to NADO RF staff to help pair NEFCO with other RDOs representing regions of similar market size.

CHALLENGES

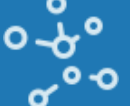
Staff had some challenges early on the benchmarking planning process, including identifying comparable peer regions and determining data and other performance metrics. Staff worked with members of the Regional CEDS Committee and staff from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) overcome these hurdles. The draft Regional Benchmarking Report is the culmination of months of analysis and data compilation. NEFCO hopes to complete and publish the report in late 2025 and begin researching best practices employed by peer regions. In 2026, staff will focus on strengthening its partnership with Team NEO, utilizing resources available through and working with economic development organizations like the Portage Development Board, Stark Economic Development Board, Greater Akron Chamber, and the Wayne Economic Development Council.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

Goal 8: Support the growth and development of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub

- A. Support growth of existing companies operating in the polymer industry and its supply chain
- B. Attract new business to the region to operate in the polymer industry and its supply chain
- C. Increase R&D funding to tackle priority materials-related technologies
- D. Increase outreach and communications efforts, targeting underserved/underrepresented populations, educating and connecting individuals to polymer industry jobs and supply chain
- E. Improve innovation infrastructure to facilitate R&D, help start-ups and established businesses, and improve global competitiveness
- F. Attract new capital to the region, including new business investment an expansion, and investors funding regional business growth

NEFCO Highlights:

	Provided letter of support/CEDS alignment to Greater Akron Chamber for Good Jobs Challenge grant proposal
	Provided letter of support/CEDS alignment and technical assistance to the Barberton Community Foundation for Local Technical Assistance grant proposal
	Participated as consortium member on Tech Hub project leads meetings

This eighth CEDS goal was added in August 2024, following the \$51 million EDA Tech Hubs Phase 2 award for the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub. The Tech Hub will be a principal economic focus in the NEFCO Region. The consortium led by the Greater Akron Chamber (GAC) is advancing innovation, growth, and investment through the implementation of seven component projects that will establish the Greater Akron region as a global leader in sustainable polymers. The funding is supporting the implementation of seven projects to advance technology maturation, commercialization, and workforce development.

The funding is supporting seven projects led by various entities:

- Commercializing the recycling of end-of-life tires (Full Circle Technologies);
- Sustainable Polymer composites via liquid phase mixing (Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company);
- Bio-based butadiene feedstock (BioVerde, Inc.);
- Carbon black and nanotube from methane source (Huntsman);
- Safer anti-degradant for tires and plastics (Flexsys);
- Workforce Initiative for a Sustainable Environment (University of Akron); and
- Regional Office of Innovation Governance (Greater Akron Chamber)

The \$51 million award represents the largest EDA grant in the NEFCO region since the organization was designated as an Economic Development District in 1978. In fact, the award is greater than the sum of all the EDA grant awards the region has ever received. The award is truly transformational for the region and the state of Ohio. Per the GAC, the Tech Hub is expected to create or retain over 4,000 jobs, spur over \$1 billion of potential private investment in expanded production, and contribute \$5 billion in total economic impact for Northeast Ohio.

In early September 2024, the Polymer Industry Cluster (PIC) – an initiative of the GAC – was awarded \$31.25 million in funding through the Ohio Department of Development's Ohio Innovation Hub Program. The PIC, which is the collaborative overseeing the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub, will utilize the funding to enhance innovation and growth within the polymer industry sector and across Northeast Ohio and complement the work of the Tech Hub. Approximately \$25 million of the award will support the development of the Polymer Pilot Plant, a facility that will enable the scaling, testing, and prototyping of new materials. The remainder of the funding will support additional R&D, workforce development, entrepreneur and startup assistance, and staffing for the PIC. Per the state, the Ohio Innovation Hubs Program aims to capitalize on a region's existing industry and research strengths to build a sustainable pipeline of talent and commercialize new products and technologies. The program supports mid-sized cities to create hubs that create jobs, increase STEM talent, and attract research funding and outside capital investment.

The GAC, in partnership with ConxusNEO, Manufacturing Works, MAGNET, Stark State College, the University of Akron, community-based organizations, and diverse regional employers, was awarded an EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant in the amount of \$3,084,371 for the Advanced Polymer and Manufacturing Experience (APEX) project. APEX will support the growth and development of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub by creating accessible career pathways in the polymer sector and will leverage the work of the Polymer Industry Cluster, which includes employers, educational institutions, industry labs, and community and labor organizations, to design and implement sector strategies for training and placing workers in good jobs. The initiative aims to recruit over 500 individuals, and place over 300 individuals into good jobs in the polymer and advanced manufacturing sectors.



The Barberton Community Foundation was awarded an \$80,400 EDA Local Technical Assistance grant to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study for establishing advanced manufacturing workforce training opportunities in Barberton. The feasibility study will explore advanced manufacturing training, polymer technology careers, and AI and advanced materials innovation. This project will also complement the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub.

CHALLENGES

Staff anticipates there will be challenges moving forward. NEFCO will need to actively work with its counties and communities to share project information, foster potential partnership opportunities, and provide technical assistance on future grant applications. NEFCO will need to work actively as a liaison between the Tech Hub Governance Team and the communities and organizations in the NEFCO region.

STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS

Schedule of Goals and Program Activities

The following timeline – between October 1, 2025, and September 30, 2026 – includes CEDS goals and NEFCO strategies that have been reviewed and approved by the NEFCO General Policy Board.

	2025			2026								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Goal 1: Address the supply chain and promote domestic production												
Support projects that address supply chain issues												
Connect local governments, universities, and other organizations to available resources and funding opportunities												
Goal 2: Support programs that build human capital												
Connect local governments and economic development organizations to available resources and funding opportunities												
Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications												
Continued implementation of ER&R Plan workforce development strategies												
Goal 3: Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters												
Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications												
Connect local governments, universities, and other organizations to available resources												
Goal 4: Promote the redevelopment of blighted, underused, or vacant and environmentally challenged sites												



	2025			2026								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Participate on Vibrant NEO's Brownfields Steering Committee												
Provide information on funding opportunities for brownfields assessment and remediation via website, newsletters, and email communications												
Better engage with county land banks to understand long-term strategies												
Re-assess NEFCO strategy for addressing regional brownfields												
Goal 5: Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing												
Connect local governments, economic development organizations, and other organizations to available resources												
Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications												
Provide updates to local governments on BroadbandOhio funding opportunities												
Better engage metropolitan planning organizations and transit authorities in CEDS planning												
ER&R Plan implementation: encourage active transportation planning												
ER&R Plan implementation: encourage transit-oriented development planning												
Better engage metropolitan housing authorities in CEDS planning												
Better engage county and regional planning commissions in CEDS planning												
Goal 6: Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies												
Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications												
Connect local governments, economic development organizations, and other organizations to available resources												
Encourage collaboration between community groups, workforce												



	2025			2026								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
development organizations, and businesses												
Help connect local governments to entrepreneurial resources												
Goal 7: Develop benchmarking to evaluate region's progress and competitiveness												
Complete and publish Regional Benchmarking Report												
Compile a list of best practices; further analysis into high performing regions identified in the Regional Benchmarking Report												
Meet with organizations (EDDs) in regions identified in the Regional Benchmarking Report to identify best practices												
Strengthen partnership with Team NEO												
Goal 8: Support the advancement of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub												
Keep NEFCO counties and communities informed of the Tech Hub and its component projects												
Communicate the needs, questions, and ideas of NEFCO counties and communities with the Tech Hub Governance Team												
Help foster partnerships between communities and the Tech Hub												
Provide technical assistance on grant applications with future projects associated with Tech Hub												