

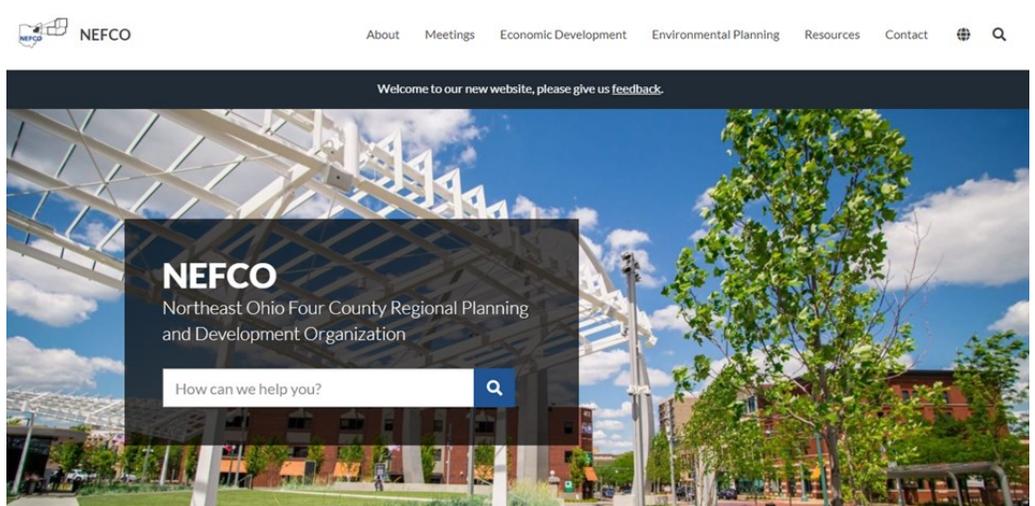


NEFCO FORUM

December 2021

New NEFCO website launched!

NEFCO's new [website](#) is live! NEFCO launched the new website on October 7, following an intense, 12-week onboarding process with web consultant, Proud City. Some of the new and improved features that visitors will notice is our content has been re-organized to improve customer service and transparency, the site is encrypted and ADA compliant and the site is mobile responsive, using best practices. Visitors will also notice the improved public meetings page as well as the predictive search feature. We will continue building the site, specifically interactive mapping features, as we address feedback from visitors. NEFCO acknowledges [ProudCity](#) and [Sprouted Acorn Photography](#) for their contributions to the site.



ER&R Planning Update

NEFCO continues to work on the Economic Recovery & Resiliency plan which is being funded by a CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant from the Economic Development Administration. Through the grant, we are working with communities and organizations in Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne Counties to develop a comprehensive economic recovery and resiliency plan, including both short-term recovery projects and long-term resilience strategies. The plan is due on June 30, 2022.

Since 2020, we have conducted over 50 individual meetings with regional partners to discuss pandemic related impacts, issues, opportunities, and obstacles. From information we gathered from these meetings, we circulated two different surveys, surveying over 1,800 individuals from the financial, non-profit, education, public and private sectors.

The ER&R Planning process is being shaped not only by the interviews and surveys, but by the instrumental contributions of three Subcommittees

(Continued on page 3)

What's Inside?



Current EDA funding opportunities	2
Regional CEDS Committee meets Nov. 18...	2
Ohio Department of Development releases rules and guidelines for \$500M brownfields programs	3
MAGNET awarded \$500,000 EDA Phase 1 Build Back Better Regional Challenge Grant.....	4
PTI Consistency Reviews in 2021	4
2022 General Policy Board officers	5
2022 Board meeting dates	5

Current EDA funding opportunities

There are currently several open American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding opportunities available through the EDA.

1. The \$500 million **Good Jobs Challenge (GJC)** strengthens systems and partnerships that group employers who have hiring needs with other key entities to train workers with in-demand skills that lead to good-paying jobs. The GJC aims to form sectoral partnerships, working collaboratively to grow regional economies and associated workforces by building training programs meeting existing and emerging skills needs of employers and helping workers enter quality jobs and advance along career path. The GJC supports collaborative skills training systems and programs. The GJC encourages efforts to reach historically underserved populations and areas, communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers. Systems and partnerships will create and implement industry-led training programs, designed to provide skills for and connect unemployed or underemployed workers to existing and emerging job opportunities.



The EDA will fund GJC proposals within the following three phases, as applicable to regional needs: (1) System Development: establish and develop regional workforce training system comprised of multiple sector partnerships; (2) Program Design: develop the skills training curriculum and materials, and secure technical expertise needed to train workers; and (3) Program Implementation: implement non-construction projects needed to provide workforce training and connect workers with quality jobs, including wrap-around services. The GJC is designed to support the needs of an applicant's identified regional workforce system through a single integrated award. The EDA will make awards to either the System Lead Entity of a regional workforce system or the Backbone Organization of a sectoral partnership as the lead applicant. These organizations may make subawards to other eligible recipients as necessary to the proposed project and as approved by EDA. The application deadline is February 10, 2022.

2. The **Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation** program provides grants to communities that have been hardest hit by challenges facing the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors to invest in infrastructure, workforce, or other projects to promote recovery and economic resilience. Competitive grants may fund new and expanded infrastructure and projects with a multi-state or national focus. There is \$26.2 million in competitive grants available for the six state Chicago Region. The application deadline is January 31, 2022.



3. The **Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA)** program supports projects that plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs. The EAA funds technical, planning, workforce development (construction only), entrepreneurship, and public works and infrastructure projects. There is \$82.7 million available for the EAA program for the Chicago Region. Awards range from \$500,000 to \$5 million. The application deadline is March 15, 2022.



Eligible applicants for the ARPA funding programs include political subdivisions, nonprofit organizations (acting in cooperation with a political subdivision), and institutions of higher education. All areas of the U.S. are eligible for funding. Grant awards are available for up to 80-percent of eligible project costs; Good Jobs Challenge grants may fund up to 100-percent of eligible project costs. Eligible applicants must apply at grants.gov. Grant award amounts and application deadlines vary by program. Projects must be consistent with the NEFCO Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and EDA Investment Priorities. All grants must be awarded by September 30, 2022, and all projects must be completed by September 30, 2027. For more information, please visit <https://eda.gov/arpa/resources/>. Please contact Nick Lautzenheiser at nick@nefcoplanning.org if you have questions regarding the funding opportunities or would like to discuss projects.



Regional CEDS Committee meets November 18

The NEFCO Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee met on November 18. The Regional CEDS Committee, which is advisory to the General Policy Board, is responsible for driving the regional economic development strategy for the region, annually reviewing and evaluating the progress of the region on the goals included in the CEDS Plan. The Committee reviewed the seven goals contained in the 2018 NEFCO CEDS Plan and the two goals added for 2021 (develop an ER&R Plan to help the region respond to the impacts of the pandemic, and support efforts to bring affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the NEFCO region). The Committee recommended adding a tenth goal for 2022: support efforts to address affordable housing and increase housing options. The Committee also discussed the EDA CARES Act Supplemental Assistance grant and the progress of the ER&R planning. Input from the Regional CEDS Committee meeting will be incorporated into the 2022 Annual Performance Report, which is due to the U.S. Economic Development Administration by January 30, 2022.

Ohio Department of Development releases rules and guidelines for \$500M brownfields programs

The Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) released rules and guidelines for the Brownfield Remediation and Building Demolition and Site Revitalization programs on December 7, 2021. The programs were authorized through House Bill 110, which was signed by Governor DeWine on June 30. Below is a summary of the two programs.

Brownfield Remediation Program:

- \$350 million to remediate brownfield sites statewide; \$1 million set-aside for each county.
- Eligible applicants include counties, townships, municipal corporations, port authorities, conservancy districts, and park districts. Additionally, county land banks, nonprofit organizations or organizations for profit are eligible if they have first entered into an agreement with a unit of local government to work in conjunction on the project for the purposes of the program
- Properties must meet the ODOD definition of a “brownfield” to be eligible: abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial, commercial, or institutional property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by known or potential releases of hazardous substances or petroleum
- Eligible costs include Phase I and II property assessments and/or asbestos surveys up to \$300,000, as well as cleanup/remediation costs aimed at containing, removing or disposing of hazardous substances at a brownfield up to \$10 million. Administrative costs such as submitting reimbursement requests and reporting information and costs associated with hiring a certified professional and preparation of a no further action letter and covenant not to sue submittal to Ohio EPA may be eligible as well.
- ODOD will administer three dedicated rounds of applications:
 - ◊ Round 1: now-Jan. 31, 2022. Priority given to projects aimed at utilizing \$1 million dedicated to each county in order to fund eligible projects with no match available.
 - ◊ Round 2: March 1-April 30, 2022. Focus on the counties that still have funds from their dedicated side-aside available.
 - ◊ Round 3: July 1-Sept. 30, 2022, or until funds have been depleted.
 - ◊ At the conclusion of each round, ODOD will review applications and award funds. Awarded funds outside of the dedicated county portion will be reviewed and awarded by ODOD on a first-come, first-served basis.

Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program:

- \$150 million to demolish commercial and residential buildings statewide and to revitalize adjacent, non-brownfield properties; \$500,000 set-aside for each county
- Eligible applicants include one designated “lead entity,” which shall be a county land bank where established, or Board of Commissioners or another unit of local government, in counties without an established county land bank
- Eligible properties are vacant and blighted commercial and residential buildings on sites that are not brownfields. Non-vacant and non-blighted structures are not eligible, unless they are contiguous and/or connected to vacant and blighted structures that are necessary to demolish.
- Eligible costs include general administrative and operating costs; costs tied to pre-demolition activities such as real estate acquisition, assessments, surveys and contract preparation; demolition costs; and post-demolition site restoration and repair costs.
- For counties with a land bank, a grant user access form must be submitted to ODOD by Dec. 20, 2021. In these instances, the county land bank is the lead entity for grant awards to the county
- For counties without a landbank, a letter of intent and grant user access form must be submitted by Board of Commissioners to ODOD by December 20, 2021. In these instances, the Board of Commissioners is the lead entity for grant awards to the county
- All applications must be submitted by close of business on February 28, 2022.

If the minimum funds set aside per county (\$1.5 million per county in total) are not obligated by each county by June 30, 2022, those funds will become available to all eligible projects statewide. No local match is required for projects awarded through the \$1.5 million dedicated county portions. Additional details can be found at ODOD website.

(Continued from page 1)

whose approximately 40 members are comprised of experts from municipalities, non-profits, business organizations, small business assistance providers, workforce development entities, funders, and academic institutions.

We have had a few subcommittee meetings this year and anticipate holding additional meetings in 2022. We are developing additional surveys which will be circulated early next year to analyze where we are as a region today as we emerge from the pandemic.

MAGNET awarded \$500,000 EDA Phase 1 Build Back Better Regional Challenge Grant!

The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET) was awarded a \$500,000 Phase 1 EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) grant. MAGNET was one of 60 Phase 1 awardees and the only recipient from Ohio; there were 529 total applicants for the BBBRC grant. The coalition, led by MAGNET, aims to grow an equitable smart manufacturing and advanced materials cluster in Northeast **Ohio**. The cluster encompasses an estimated 700 firms, 45,000 workers, and \$12 billion Gross Regional Product. The coalition's proposed projects aim to bring innovation to the region, especially around smart and advanced technologies, while encouraging innovation and workforce development. MAGNET now will assemble a proposal and compete for a Phase 2 BBBRC grant of up to \$100 million to implement three to eight projects supporting the smart manufacturing and advanced materials cluster. If provided an implementation grant, the coalition proposes to execute component projects that expand the applications of cluster technologies into specialized market segments and improve the region's supply chain through entrepreneurship and capitalization, infrastructure, and workforce pillars. NEFCO provided a letter of support for this project and is identified as a partner in the project narrative summary.

PTI Consistency Reviews in 2021 demonstrate the importance of the 208 Plan to region's commercial/economic development, residential development, and clean water

As the state-designated areawide planning agency under Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act, NEFCO controls wastewater management facilities planning in Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties through its General Policy Board and Clean Water Plan (208 Plan), the region's water quality management plan. Many water quality improvement projects, commercial/economic development projects, and residential development projects in the NEFCO region require a Permit-to-Install (PTI) from Ohio EPA to allow private operators or county and municipal wastewater management agencies to make sewage treatment system improvements and/or extend sanitary sewers to land being developed. While Ohio EPA is the authority for issuing PTIs, NEFCO is a step in the agency's draft PTI review process. In accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and the federal Clean Water Act, Ohio EPA cannot legally issue a PTI that is in conflict with a 208 Plan. Because of this, each Monday morning, the agency sends a list of draft PTIs to NEFCO and the other five areawide planning agencies in the state to review the draft PTIs for consistency with their respective 208 Plans.

The 208 Plan's Facilities Planning Areas maps delineate areas that are currently served with sanitary sewer, areas that are expected to be served with sewer within the next 20 years, and areas that are to remain unsewered. When NEFCO staff determines that a draft PTI is consistent with the 208 Plan, Ohio EPA can complete its review process and issue the PTI after the agency determines that the proposed project meets all other pertinent state and federal regulations. When NEFCO staff determines that a draft PTI is NOT consistent with the 208 Plan, the staff notifies the Ohio EPA of the inconsistency, and the agency halts its draft PTI review and advises the applicant to withdraw the PTI application. Since NEFCO works closely with the wastewater management agencies during regular 208 Plan updates, PTI delays are rare for any type of project due to a lack of consistency with the 208 Plan .

From January 1, 2021 to December 10, 2021 (the deadline for this article), NEFCO received 120 draft PTIs from Ohio EPA and performed consistency reviews for each of them. TABLE 1 below demonstrates that of these 120 draft PTIs, 116 (96.67%) were determined to be consistent with the 208 Plan. Four of these 120 draft PTIs (3.33%) are not shown in TABLE 1 since they were not consistent with the 208 Plan, meaning these four draft PTIs were for a proposed wastewater treatment option different from what's called for in the 208 Plan. While there were many other water quality improvement projects, commercial/economic development projects, and residential development projects started this year that did not require a PTI from Ohio EPA, the total number of PTI consistency reviews performed by NEFCO during this period demonstrates the importance of the 208 Plan to the success of these projects and to the success of the region's clean water.

Table 1

Draft Permits-to-Install Received by NEFCO from Ohio EPA
January 1—December 10, 2021; and Determined to be Consistent with the 208 Plan

County	Draft PTIs for Water Quality Improvement Projects	Draft PTIs for Commercial/Economic Development Projects	Draft PTIs for Residential Development Projects
Portage	2	6	9
Stark	10	17	7
Summit	18	10	27
Wayne	1	7	2
Total	31	40	45

2022 General Policy Board Officers

- Chair:** Richard Regula, Commissioner, Stark County
- First Vice-Chair:** Thomas A. Tatum, Manager, Housing and Community Services Division, City of Akron
- Second Vice-Chair:** Pete Wearstler, Director, Wayne County Planning Department
- Secretary:** Todd Peetz, Director, Portage County Regional Planning Commission
- Treasurer:** Craig Stanley, Director of Administrative Services, Summit County
- Immediate Past Chair:** Dan Moeglin, City Engineer, City of Canton



At its December 15, 2021 meeting the General Policy Board elected a new slate of officers. The Board thanked Mr. Moeglin for his service as Board Chair for the last three years.

Congratulations, 2022 officers!

2022 NEFCO Board Meeting Dates			
January 19	April 20	July 20	October 19
February 16	May 18	August 17	November 16
March 16	June 15	September 21	December 21

These meetings are currently being held in the City of Green's Administration Offices. When is it safe to do so the meetings will continue at the Summa Health Center in Green at 8:30 a.m. Please check out NEFCO's website to confirm details for these meetings.

NEFCO FORUM

The *NEFCO Forum* is published by the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization
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NEFCO is a regional council serving Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne Counties and the city, village and township governments and citizens within the four-county area. The *NEFCO Forum* was prepared using Federal funds under award ED19CHI3020021 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, USEPA, the Ohio EPA, and NEFCO's dues-paying members. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Economic Development Administration or the U.S. Department of Commerce. We welcome comments, ideas and editorial contributions for future issues from our readers. Please submit these to the address shown above.

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MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the region's quality of life, through collaborative planning efforts with NEFCO's area governments, in order to ensure environmental quality, orderly growth, and economic and community development