



NEFCO FORUM

April 2023

General Policy Board approves 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



The NEFCO General Policy Board adopted the [2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#) on January 18, 2023. The CEDS is a regional economic development plan, which aims to promote prosperity, equity, and resiliency in NEFCO's four-county region of Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties.

NEFCO, which serves as the federal Economic Development District for the four-county region, updates the CEDS every five years. The 2023-2028 CEDS is a full update to the 2018 CEDS. This report was prepared to fulfill a requirement of NEFCO's Partnership Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). Preparation and maintenance of the CEDS maintains NEFCO's status as an EDA-designated Economic Development District and the region's eligibility for EDA grant funding. NEFCO is one of 380 Economic Development Districts in the U.S.

The CEDS includes a comprehensive demographic analysis and overview of regional economic conditions; a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis; target industry identification; a resiliency component, integrating NEFCO's recently published Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan; and an Action Plan, including goals, subgoals, and strategies, with identified partners and resources, implementation timeframes, performance metrics, and NEFCO-specific strategies. The CEDS is the result of a robust

planning process that began in April 2022 and has included significant input from the NEFCO's advisory and technical committee.

"This plan provides a blueprint to help our region build a thriving, inclusive, and resilient economy," said NEFCO Executive Director Joseph Hadley. "Implementation of the CEDS will require responsive community and business leaders, innovative solutions, and regional collaboration."

"The CEDS will drive the NEFCO regional economic development planning work program for the next five years," said Nick Lautzenheiser, Program Manager for Economic Development Planning. "The CEDS includes seven goals and numerous

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subgoals and strategies to promote regional economic prosperity and resiliency. The CEDS is meant to be dynamic; goals and strategies can be modified to respond to regional priorities.” Lautzenheiser notes that the CEDS is not meant to supersede or replace any existing community or organizational plan. “We are fortunate to have numerous economic development organizations and communities with economic development departments in our region. The NEFCO CEDS is all about regionalism and collaboration. Many of the goals and subgoals included in the CEDS are intended to be led by communities and organizations other than NEFCO. NEFCO’s role is to promote collaborative partnerships and regional cooperation. When one community in our region succeeds, our entire region succeeds. We hope the CEDS inspires and leads to successful project implementation.”

To learn more visit <https://www.nefcoplanning.org/Comprehensive-Economic-Development-Strategy-CEDS>.

CEDS Goals

	Address the supply chain and promote domestic production
	Support programs that build human capital
	Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio’s economic clusters
	Promote redevelopment of blighted, underused, vacant, and environmentally challenged sites
	Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing
	Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies
	Develop benchmarking to evaluate region’s progress and competitiveness

Committee will work with our regional community and economic development partners to encourage the adoption of strategies that will lead to regional prosperity and resiliency,” said NEFCO Program Manager for Economic Development Planning, Nick Lautzenheiser. “It is our hope that by engaging communities and organizations around the NEFCO region, some of the strategies will be considered.”

EDA issues FY2023 Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance notice of funding opportunity

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) published on March 15th the [notice of funding opportunity](#) for the FY2023 Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance (PW/EAA) program. The PW/EAA program supports construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects. Eligible geographies include communities with a per capita median income of 80 percent or less than the national average or an unemployment rate of one percent or greater than the national average. A non-federal match of 50 percent is required. Eligible applicants include political subdivisions, nonprofit organizations (acting in cooperation with a political subdivision), and institutions of higher education. Eligible applicants must apply at grants.gov. Projects must be consistent with the NEFCO CEDS Plan and EDA Investment Priorities. Projects must promote job creation and stimulate private investment. The EDA is stressing the importance of equity and recovery and resiliency as key investment priorities. Applicants must also demonstrate economic distress. Please contact Nick Lautzenheiser at nick@nefcoplanning.org if you have questions regarding the PW/EAA program or would like to discuss projects. For more information, please visit <https://eda.gov/>



ER&R Implementation Committee established

The NEFCO General Policy Board approved the [Economic Recovery & Resiliency \(ER&R\) Plan](#) on July 20, 2022. The ER&R Plan was funded by a CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Through the grant, NEFCO worked collaboratively 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.

Per the recommendation of the General Policy Board, NEFCO has established an ER&R Implementation Committee to work with communities and organizations in the NEFCO Region and encourage the implementation of strategies identified in the three subareas of the ER&R Plan: Community Development, Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship, and Regional Business.

“The ER&R Implementation



General Policy Board approves 208 Plan's annual FPA update guidelines

As the state-designated water quality management planning agency for Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties, NEFCO is responsible for coordinating the use, amendments to, and updates of the region's Clean Water Plan (208 Plan), in accordance with Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act. In recent years, some of NEFCO's members expressed an interest in having the 208 Plan's facilities planning areas (FPAs) updated more frequently than every several years, which has been the frequency of past 208 Plan FPA updates. In response to this interest, NEFCO's current contract with Ohio EPA includes the initiation of a voluntary annual FPA update process. This is an opportunity for primary wastewater management agencies (MAs) to update the boundaries and/or wastewater treatment prescriptions (options) of their respective FPAs. This information can be found in the 208 Plan's Chapter 3 Appendices.

At the March 1st NEFCO Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee (ERTAC) meeting, after several months of the committee's technical review, the ERTAC unanimously recommended that the NEFCO General Policy Board approve the guidelines and associated timeline for initiating a voluntary annual FPA update process. The NEFCO Board approved the guidelines on March 15th. On March 17th, NEFCO staff sent them to the region's 38 primary MAs (operators of publicly-owned treatment works and sewers), notifying them of the start of this year's FPA update and establishing a June 19, 2023 deadline for them to submit their 'draft FPA update application packet,' which is defined in the guidelines.

"This first annual FPA update is completely voluntary on the part of the MAs. There will be no consequence to MAs that choose not to participate in the process," said Tom LaPlante, NEFCO's water quality/environmental planner who is responsible for leading the agency's 208 planning update, and for management of NEFCO's 208 Plan. "Some of the region's primary MAs asked for the opportunity to update their FPAs more frequently, and NEFCO staff delivered," added LaPlante.

Under the federal Clean Water Act and Ohio Revised Code, Ohio EPA cannot issue a Permit-to-Install (PTI) for sanitary sewer extensions or approve an infrastructure loan when either conflict with the 208 Plan. Therefore, it is advantageous for the MAs to anticipate areas under their wastewater jurisdiction, which may not currently be consistent with the 208 Plan, and to recommend an FPA update so that the area is compliant with the 208 Plan's wastewater treatment options.

"The annual FPA update process will make FPA updates more manageable than letting needed updates accumulate over several years, and then having to undertake a comprehensive 201/208 FPA update. The annual update process may alleviate delays for some expected economic and residential development projects which would currently conflict with the 208 Plan. By correctly anticipating the size of an expected project, the MA can prepare an adequate 208 Plan



update through NEFCO's annual FPA update process, thus enabling the project to be in agreement with the Plan prior to the submittal of the project's permit or loan application," said LaPlante.

For more information about NEFCO's annual FPA update process or the 208 Plan, please contact Tom LaPlante at tlaplante@nefcoplaning.org.

Lautzenheiser promoted to Program Manager for Economic Development Planning

Nick Lautzenheiser was recently promoted to Program Manager for Economic Development Planning. Nick is responsible for leading NEFCO's regional economic development planning, including management of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) planning. "Nick has demonstrated his ability to successfully advance NEFCO's Economic Development District, and is well regarded by our funder EDA, and by our members. I look forward to his continued growth in addressing the economic development needs and opportunities of our Region's local and county governments, as well as his collaborative leadership in more non-traditional NEFCO services including broadband and energy," said NEFCO Executive Director Joe Hadley.

Nick has over 20 years of public and private sector experience in planning, community and economic development, grant administration, GIS, and nonprofit management. Nick previously worked with NEFCO between 2003-2005 as an Environmental Planner and GIS Specialist. Nick has a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from The University of Akron and a Bachelor's Degree in Art History from Youngstown State University. Contact Nick at nick@nefcoplanning.org for more information about NEFCO's regional economic development planning or for assistance on projects and grant applications.



EDA announces 2023 STEM Talent Challenge opportunity

On April 11th, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) published the 2023 STEM Talent Challenge [notice of funding opportunity](#). This program supports the creation and implementation of innovative science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) work-based learning models that complement the respective region's innovation economy. The STEM Talent Challenge seeks to develop or expand regional workforce capacity to support high-growth, high-wage entrepreneurial ventures, industries of the future (which usually includes industries that leverage emerging technologies), and other innovation-driven businesses that have a high likelihood of accelerating economic competitiveness and job creation in their respective regions. Eligible applicants include local governments, nonprofit organizations, economic development organizations, and institutions of higher education. A non-federal match of 50 percent is required. The application deadline is June 12, 2023. Please contact Nick Lautzenheiser at nick@nefcoplanning.org if you have questions or would like to discuss projects. For more information, visit <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/stem-challenge>.

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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