



NEFCO FORUM

December 2023

General Policy Board approves FY2024 Clean Water (208) Plan FPA update

On December 20th, the NEFCO General Policy Board approved the FY2024 Clean Water (208) Plan facilities planning area (FPA) update. With this approval, NEFCO has completed the first annual 208 Plan FPA acronym update to assist the region’s wastewater management agencies (MAs) that wanted to update the boundaries and/or wastewater treatment prescriptions of their respective FPAs.

NEFCO was designated in 1979 by the Governor of Ohio to prepare and manage a water quality management plan for Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties in accordance with Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act. “This updated is an important milestone,” said Tom LaPlante, NEFCO’s water quality/environmental planner for the 208 Plan. “The Ohio EPA consults NEFCO’s 208 Plan when it is considering discharge permits and grants or loans for wastewater infrastructure improvements; it’s



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Greater Akron Chamber awarded EDA Tech Hub Designation and Strategy Development Grant!

On October 23rd, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded a consortium led by the Greater Akron Chamber a Tech Hub Designation and \$400,000 Strategy Development Grant for the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub project. The project was one of 31 Tech Hubs designated nationwide, and the only for Ohio. Only 11 applicants across the U.S. received both a Tech Hub Designation and a Strategy Development Grant. The EDA received more than 400 applications from regional consortia throughout the U.S. for Phase 1 of the Regional Technology and Innovation Hub Program (Tech Hubs). Regional consortia must include industry, academia, state and/or local governments, economic development organizations, and labor and workforce partners. The Tech Hub Designation is an endorsement by the EDA of the region’s plans to catalyze their respective technological industries to create jobs, strengthen U.S. competitiveness, and protect national security. The Sustainable

Polymers Tech Hub aims to accelerate polymer manufacturing and commercialization in the United States through non-fossil fuel-derived materials, which will have positive climatic and



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good for our region’s water quality and economic development that some of the MAs took advantage of the opportunity to update their FPAs.”

Staff worked closely with the NEFCO Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee and member agencies and departments on this important update , and on establishing an annual FPA update process. The products from this FPA update consisted of nine relatively small updates where several MAs in Stark and Summit Counties requested FPA and district boundary modifications or wastewater prescription changes to the FPA maps. General Policy Board approval of the update allows NEFCO to submit the changes to Ohio EPA before December 29th, the Ohio EPA’s deadline for 208 Plan submittals to be considered for state certification. Once the update has been certified by the state, Ohio EPA will submit it for approval by the U.S. EPA. Once it has been approved by the U.S. EPA, the update will be incorporated into the state’s Water Quality Management Plan.



For more information on the FY2024 208 Plan FPA update, please visit NEFCO’s [website](#), or contact [Tom LaPlante](#).

Stark Economic Development Board awarded EDA Recompete Plan and Strategy Development Grant!

On December 20th, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded a consortium led by the Stark Economic Development Board (SEDB) a Recompete Plan approval and \$500,000 Strategy Development Grant for the Reconnecting Canton project. Reconnecting Canton – a collaborative project of SEDB’s Strengthening Stark Network and in conjunction with the city of Canton – aims to reduce the prime age employment gap in Canton through planning and targeted investments in workforce development strategies, transportation, childcare, and other critical infrastructure to remove barriers to employment and connect people with good jobs. The SEDB-led coalition of committed partners includes the City of Canton, Canton for All People, Ohio Means Jobs, Strengthening Stark Career Connect, Stark Area Regional Transit Authority, and the Greater Stark County Urban League. Reconnecting Canton focuses on eight Census tracts in southeast Canton.

The SEDB was one of only 22 Recompete Plan awardees nationwide, and the only for Ohio. The SEDB was one of only 15 applicants across the U.S. to receive both a Recompete Plan approval and a Strategy Development Grant. The EDA received more than 500 applications from regional consortia throughout the U.S. for Phase 1 of the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program (Recompete). The Recompete Plan approval is an endorsement by the EDA of the coalition’s plans to offer solutions to create jobs, develop long-term economic growth, and realize the full potential in an area that has long experienced disinvestment.

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environmental impacts. With the Phase 1 Tech Hub Designation comes an invitation to the Greater Akron Chamber and its consortium (including NEFCO) to apply for Tech Hubs Phase 2 (Implementation) funding. If awarded, Phase 2 funding would provide transformational regional economic growth and position the Greater Akron region as a global leader in sustainable polymers. For Phase 2, the EDA expects to provide five to 10 awards, each between \$50-75 million, for the implementation of three to eight projects identified in Phase 1 applications. NEFCO provided technical assistance in the development of the Phase 1 application,



and the General Policy Board provided a letter of support. NEFCO will continue to provide technical assistance to the Greater Akron Chamber and the consortium throughout the Phase 2 application development and with the Strategy Development grant. “The Greater Akron Chamber and its Polymer Industry Cluster partners are thrilled to receive this elite designation as a federal Tech Hub,” said Brian Anderson, Vice President, Polymer Industry Cluster with the Greater Akron Chamber. “It was a highly competitive process, and we appreciate and benefitted from the support of NEFCO to help represent the innovation and growth assets and opportunities of our region. With further collaboration, shared vision, and hard work, we hope to continue our momentum and win the Tech Hub’s phase 2 grant to implement catalytic projects and further elevate our region.”

The Tech Hubs Phase 2 application deadline is February 29, 2024. For more information on the Tech Hubs Phase 1 awards, click [here](#).



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EDA accepting applications for Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance Program

The FY2023 [Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) (PW/EAA) program through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) supports construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects. Projects must foster job creation/retention and private investment and be consistent with the [NEFCO Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) and [EDA Investment Priorities](#). Eligible applicants include political subdivisions, nonprofits (acting in cooperation with a political subdivision), and institutions of higher education. Projects must be located in communities with a per capita median income of 80 percent or less than the national average or a 24-month unemployment rate of one percent or greater than the national average. For FY2023, there is approximately \$5 million available for projects in Ohio. Applicants must generally contribute 50 percent of total project costs in local match. Applications are accepted until funding is exhausted. As the EDA-designated Economic Development District for Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties, NEFCO provides technical assistance and authoritative recommendations on EDA grant projects to help make applications more competitive and ensure projects meet EDA investment priorities. For more information or to discuss projects, please contact [Nick Lautzenheiser](#).



Cuyahoga River already experiencing water quality improvements since Canal Diversion Dam removal

The Cuyahoga River near the Route 82 bridge in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) is flowing freely today, with noticeably improved water quality upstream since the removal of the 1952 Canal Diversion Dam and the adjacent 1827 Pinery Dam. The two impoundments had impacted water quality, fish habitat and migration, and recreational safety.

In 2019, NEFCO received an \$800,000 grant from the U.S. EPA through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to fund the removal of these two dams. NEFCO's role was to manage the grant and act as the fiscal agent. The Friends of the Crooked River (FOCR) was a subrecipient of the grant; the FOCR and its contractor secured permits, completed the design and demolition of the dams, and designed and constructed the pump station, which was donated to the National Park Service. Other partners included the U.S. EPA Region 5 Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO), Ohio EPA, Ohio Lake Erie Commission, National Park Service/CVNP, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), and the City of Akron. Other project monies included Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) funds from the City of Akron and the NEORS.



The purpose of the Canal Diversion Dam Removal Project was to allow for restoration of both the riverine habitat and ecological health of the Cuyahoga River, upstream from the dam's location. The project also improved safety for river paddlers. After years of planning, securing funds, permits, agreements, and designs, demolition of the dams began in May 2020. By early summer 2020, both dams were completely removed from the Cuyahoga River. With the removal of the dams, the sediment load in the dam pool quickly moved downstream and became incorporated into the river's bedload and floodplain deposits. Today, only naturally fractured bedrock ledges, cobbles and boulders, and pools and riffles are visible where the dams once stood.

Elaine Marsh, President of the Friends of the Crooked River, thanked the NEFCO Board for sponsoring the project and acting as the fiscal agency. "Without NEFCO this project wouldn't have been completed," said Marsh. Despite delays from COVID, high water, and construction issues, the project was a big success and a great collaborative effort. The Cuyahoga River is already benefitting from the project.

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The Recompete Program is a \$200 million, two-phase program providing funding to foster economic activity in geographically diverse and persistently distressed communities across the country. This program targets areas where prime-age (25-54 years) employment significantly trails the national average, with the goal to close this gap through flexible, strategy development and implementation investments. In Phase 1, applicants had the option to apply for (1) Strategy Development Grants, (2) Approval of a Recompete Plan, or (3) both. No funding is included with the approval of a Recompete Plan; however, approval was necessary to be eligible to apply for a Phase 2 Implementation Grant. The Stark coalition and the other 21 finalists will now compete for the Recompete Phase 2. For Phase 2, the EDA expects to provide four to eight awards, each \$20-\$50 million for the implementation of three to eight projects identified in Phase 1 applications. Projects may support a wide range of implementation activities across workforce development, business and entrepreneur development, infrastructure, and additional planning, predevelopment, or technical assistance. The NEFCO General Policy Board provided a letter of support for the Phase 1 application. The Recompete Phase 2 application deadline is April 25, 2024. For more information on the Recompete Phase 1 awards, click [here](#).

2024 General Policy Board Officers

Chair: Vincent A. Marion, Manager, Planning and Zoning, City of Wooster

First Vice-Chair: Jonathan Hofstetter, Commissioner, Wayne County

Second Vice-Chair: James Benekos, City Engineer, City of Canton

Secretary: Todd Peetz, Director, Portage County Regional Planning Commission

Treasurer: Joe Eckenrode, Deputy Director of Administrative Services, Summit County

Immediate Past Chair: Richard Regula, Commissioner, Stark County

At its December 20, 2023 meeting the General Policy Board elected a new slate of officers.

Congratulations and thank you, 2024 officers!

NOACA-Vibrant NEO accepting Revolving Loan Fund applications



The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA)-Vibrant NEO Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) application is open to applicants from the 12 counties in the Vibrant NEO region, including all four NEFCO counties. The RLF was capitalized by a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The RLF provides zero-percent loans to support the clean-up and remediation of brownfield sites. Eligible applicants include local governments, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit entities. Applicants must not have contributed to or be responsible for the contamination of the subject site. Applications are accepted year-round. NEFCO, which is an active member of Vibrant NEO, encourages communities and organizations in the region to apply. The application form can be found [here](#). For more information, please contact [Nick Lautzenheiser](#).

2024 NEFCO Board Meeting Dates

January 17
February 21
March 20
April 17
May 15
June 26
July 17
August 21
September 18
October 16
November 20
December 18

These meetings are held in the City of Green, Council Chambers or Community Hall Central Park at 8:30 a.m. Please check NEFCO's website to confirm details for these meetings.

NEFCO FORUM

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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