



NEFCO FORUM

August 2021

NEFCO partners with EDA to host informational webinar on ARPA funding

NEFCO will hold an informational webinar on Tuesday, August 3, 2021 at 10:00AM to review the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding opportunities. The EDA Economic Development Representative from Ohio, Ellen Heinz, will join NEFCO staff in providing program information and will answer questions from webinar participants.

This webinar will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. The link to join the virtual meeting can be found on the NEFCO website.

EDA issues American Rescue Plan Notices of Funding Opportunity

On July 22, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) issued six notices of funding opportunity (NOFO), totaling \$3 billion in supplemental funding the EDA received through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). NEFCO will highlight five of these NOFOs below.

The \$1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) is a two-phase program designed to assist communities nationwide in their efforts to build back better by accelerating the economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and building local economies that will be resilient to future economic shocks. The BBBRC provides transformational investment to 20-30 regions across the U.S. looking to revitalize their economies through a collection of complementary, aligned construction and non-construction projects organized under a singular vision and designed to grow new industries and scale existing ones. Regions will have opportunities to grow new regional industry clusters or scale existing ones through planning, infrastructure, innovation and entrepreneurship, workforce development, and access to capital.



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The first phase, the Concept Proposal, will help regions develop transformational economic development strategies. Between 50-60 regional coalitions of partnering entities will be awarded approximately \$500,000 in technical assistance funds to develop and support three to eight projects to grow a regional growth cluster. The Concept Proposal application deadline is October 19, 2021. The second phase will fund the implementation of those strategies that will create and grow regional growth clusters. The EDA will award 20-30 regional coalitions \$25-\$75 million (and up to \$100 million) to implement those projects. Awardees who successfully advance to the second phase must submit full applications by March 15, 2022.

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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 targets qualified organizations 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. Ultimately, these systems are designed to train workers with the skills to secure a union job or a quality job that provides good pay, benefits, and growth opportunities.



The EDA will fund proposals within the following three phases, as applicable to regional needs: (1) System Development: help 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 for the Good Jobs Challenge is January 26, 2022.

The Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) is EDA’s most flexible program. The 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, entrepreneurship, and public works and infrastructure projects. There is \$82.7 million available for the EAA program for the Chicago Region (which includes Ohio). Awards range from \$500,000 to \$5 million. The application deadline is March 15, 2022.



The Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) program aims to accelerate the recovery of communities that rely on the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors. TTOR provides both competitive and non-competitive grants. Non-competitive grants are made directly to states to help states quickly invest in marketing, infrastructure, workforce and other projects to rejuvenate safe leisure, business and international travel. Competitive grants are available to eligible applicants to help 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 support the recovery of the industry and economic resilience of the community in the future. Competitive grants fund projects that are focused on new and expanded infrastructure, projects with a multi-state or national focus. There is \$26.2 million in competitive grants available for the Chicago Region. The application deadline is March 15, 2022

The Statewide Planning, Research, and Networks program includes both non-competitive grants directly to states and competitive grants. The competitive grants - the Communities of Practice Challenge - provides funding to eligible applicants to invest in research that assesses the effectiveness of EDA’s programs and provides support for stakeholder communities around key EDA initiatives. There is \$6 million in competitive grants available for the Chicago Region. The application deadline: October 31, 2021.



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NEFCO collaborates with the Ohio EPA, Summit County Land Bank to identify an Akron site for up to \$225K in brownfields assessment funding

NEFCO staff, on behalf of the Summit Brownfields Coalition (the Development Finance Authority of Summit County and Summit County Public-Health), is assisting the Ohio EPA in identifying a site for use of up to \$225,000 in brownfields assessment funding. The Ohio EPA contacted NEFCO in late June and indicated there were additional monies available for Summit County. The monies became available through bankruptcy funds. The Ohio EPA identified the sites for these funds by using the list of Brownfield Priority Sites from the NEFCO led Summit County Brownfield Coalition USEPA grant application which was submitted last fall.

The site identified is located at 182 Beaver Street in Akron. The six-acre industrial property was a former foundry and was constructed in 1910. The site is just east of State Route 8 and borders the University of Akron, an elementary school, and a residential neighborhood. The property is now owned by the Summit County Land Bank, which acquired the property through a tax foreclosure in 2020. NEFCO collaborated with the Ohio EPA and the Summit County Land Bank to potentially secure funding to complete a Voluntary Action Plan Phase II Assessment on the property.

The project has the support of the Ohio EPA Director, though the application has not yet been submitted. The Ohio EPA will utilize its Targeted Brownfields Assessment process, bidding out the project to its three (3) qualified level of effort (LOE) contractors. NEFCO staff will keep our General Policy Board apprised of this project as it develops.



182 Beaver Street, Akron

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Eligible applicants for the ARPA funding programs include political subdivisions (counties, municipalities, townships, etc.), or a consortium of political subdivisions; councils of government and economic development districts (NEFCO); colleges, universities, or consortium of institutions of higher education; and public or private nonprofits acting in cooperation with a political subdivision. All areas of the U.S. are eligible for funding. Grant awards are available for up to 80-percent of eligible project costs. Eligible applicants must apply at [grants.gov](https://www.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. Per the ARPA, grants must be awarded by September 30, 2022, and all projects must be completed by September 30, 2027.



For more information on the EDA and the ARPA funding opportunities, please visit the [EDA website](#). Additional resources on the six ARPA funding programs, including one-page fact sheets can be found [here](#). Please contact Nick Lautzenheiser at nick@nefcoplanning.org if you have questions regarding the NOFOs or would like to discuss projects.

NEFCO regional business survey results

The NEFCO Regional Business Survey closed on April 30. The survey was distributed to over 1,000 private sector business contacts throughout the region, as part of NEFCO economic recovery and resiliency (ER&R) planning process. We received 121 total completed surveys. This survey followed the ER&R survey, which was distributed in February. The Regional Business Survey further assesses the impacts of the pandemic, specifically on businesses throughout the NEFCO region. Of the respondents, 35-percent were businesses with 50 or more employees; 28-percent had between two and 10 employees. Of those businesses surveyed, 73-percent had been in operation for more than 10 years. Additionally, 53 -percent of responding businesses were locally owned, and 18-percent were woman-owned. The top three impacts from the pandemic included decline in sales and customers, change in business model/operation, and supply chain disruptions. Current concerns include staffing and employee and customer safety. These data will help NEFCO direct its ER&R planning efforts. The City of Akron, Portage Development Board, Stark Economic Development Board, Streetsboro Chamber of Commerce, Canton Regional Chamber, Alliance Area Development, Wooster Main Street helped distribute this survey. Thank you to all who participated.

NEFCO submits letter to area state legislators requesting broadband funding in biennium budget and removal of restrictive language relative to government-owned broadband networks

NEFCO submitted a letter to its 15 state legislators on June 17, as was approved by the Board at its meeting the day before. The letter requested funding for the Residential Broadband Expansion Program, which was included in the version of the state budget passed by the Ohio House, but removed in the approved Senate budget bill. Additionally, NEFCO requested support in removing language included in the Ohio Senate's version of the state budget relative to government-owned broadband networks.

The House version of the budget had included \$190 million for broadband expansion; the Senate version of the budget zeroed out the monies for the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion grant program and included provisions limiting the operability, establishment, and expansion of broadband networks owned by political subdivisions. After negotiations in the conference committee, the budget approved by the House and Senate and signed by the Governor includes \$250 million from the state's general revenue fund for the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Also, the restrictive language relative to government-owned broadband networks was removed.

ER&R Subcommittees meet May 11, 12, 14

The three Economic Recovery & Resiliency (ER&R) planning subcommittees met on May 11, 12, and 14. The Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship, Regional Business, and Community Development subcommittees are taking deeper dives into critical areas identified through regional community meetings and NEFCO's ER&R and Regional Business surveys. The subcommittees are working on the development of the ER&R Plan and the next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan. The subcommittees will help the region respond to the economic impacts of the pandemic by identifying short-term recovery programs and projects and developing long-term resilience strategies. If you would like to virtually serve on one of these committees or participate in the planning process, please email Diane Sheridan at diane@nefcoplanning.org.

NEFCO website redesign update

NEFCO executed the contract with Proud City to redesign the organizational website. NEFCO staff began the 12-week onboarding process on July 12. Staff will complete the onboarding training and will work closely with Proud City on the website redevelopment process. The new, redesigned NEFCO website is expected to go live in early October. NEFCO is utilizing U.S. Economic Development Administration CARES Act grant monies for a portion of this cost. Please contact Diane Sheridan at diane@nefcoplanning.org for more details.

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