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Northeast Ohio wins Build Back Better Regional Challenge Phase 1 Grant

MAGNET-led coalition will compete for up to \$75 million to supercharge regional economy

CLEVELAND, OH – The U.S. Economic Development Agency selected a MAGNET-led effort as one of 60 national finalists, and the only in Ohio, for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) grant. The coalition’s proposal outlines ways to fortify supply chain resilience through the growth of smart manufacturing and advanced materials and a sharp eye toward equitable outcomes. The phase 1 grant will support further planning of projects across Northeast Ohio, including remote health monitoring device development, the deployment of smart sensors throughout Lake Erie’s ports and waterways, and a commercialization facility to innovate and test new smart materials.

“When we look at the assets already present in Northeast Ohio – R&D, infrastructure, natural assets, talent pools, entrepreneurship and capitalization – we simply need to put it all together to propel massive growth and we believe this grant can help us do just that,” said Ethan Karp, PhD, President and CEO of MAGNET. “This planning grant will help us prepare for the second phase of BBBRC which could mean up to \$75 million in support for these projects which will boost our regional economy.”

Crafted in collaboration with dozens of organizations across Northeast Ohio including Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Stark Economic Development Board, Team NEO, and Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, the proposal recommended capitalizing on the competitive advantages of our region to catalyze meaningful and lasting growth that is more equitable for all members of the Northeast Ohio community.

“Smart manufacturing is both a driver and a growth opportunity for the region,” said Baiju R. Shah, president and CEO of Greater Cleveland Partnership. “We are excited that the ‘All-In’ collaborative approach, with support from more than 250 private, public, and nonprofit organizations, was recognized in this highly competitive process.”

The BBBRC is assisting 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. It is the largest economic development initiative from the U.S. Department of Commerce in decades. The \$500,000 award from the EDA will allow further planning on targeted projects led by BRITE Energy Innovators, Cleveland Water Alliance, Cuyahoga County, Jumpstart, MAGNET, Ohio Aerospace Institute, University of Akron College of Engineering and Polymer Science, University Hospitals and in coordination with diversity, equity and inclusion leads from Akron Urban League, Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development, and the Urban League of Greater Cleveland.



“We are pleased that the EDA recognized the important role Northeast Ohio can play by strengthening and building greater resilience in our nation’s supply chains,” said William Koehler, CEO, Team NEO. “This planning grant is a unique opportunity to further highlight ways Northeast Ohio businesses, public sector leaders, philanthropy, and economic development organizations can make lasting impact on our regional, state, and national economy.”

“The EDA’s grant underscores the power we have in Northeast Ohio when we collaborate. Exploring avenues that will improve our individual communities while lifting the region as a whole was the goal of all involved,” said Ray Hexamer, CEO, Stark Economic Development Board.

With its robust network of nearly 10,000 manufacturers, Northeast Ohio is central to the nation’s supply chain, geographically and economically. These manufacturers produce components for every sector and industry.

“From the legacy of manufacturing to the reality of a deep ecosystem of distribution, thought leadership and advanced applications, our work with polymers seeks to drive a new wave of innovation, research and product leadership for Northeast Ohio, centered right here in Greater Akron,” shared Steve Millard, President and CEO, Greater Akron Chamber.

EDA received 529 applications from regions in all 50 states and five territories, and the 60 finalists represent regions that formed extraordinary coalitions, demonstrated regional needs, and presented bold proposals to grow their target industry clusters. Ranging from rural communities and coastal towns to major metros, the finalists make up a diverse cross-section of the United States.

"We look forward to the next phase of partnering with our colleagues across Northeast Ohio to become the epicenter for the future of U.S. manufacturing. The Mahoning Valley, with its infrastructure, talent and organizations spearheading emerging technologies, stands to experience significant economic growth," said Guy Coviello, President & CEO, Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber

“With a little extra help, our region’s manufacturers can effectively make products that are currently waiting in ports, get those products where they need to be faster, and create new materials and technologies to prepare our country for the future,” Dr. Karp shared.

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About MAGNET: The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network

MAGNET’s mission is to play a vital role in growing the manufacturing sector in Northeast Ohio, thereby creating more vibrant communities, increasing economic inclusion, and building a stronger middle class in our region. Since 1984, MAGNET has offered a wide range of hands-on consulting services to manufacturers as part of the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and Ohio MEP. These services, which include product and process development, workforce initiatives, start-up support, and lean/operations consulting, help companies grow locally and compete globally.