

Site Readiness and Good Jobs Initiative - Project Summary

The Fund for Our Economic Future (FFEF), a 501c3 civic partnership, is applying for Recompete Strategy Development grant serving five contiguous census tracts in Cleveland (OH), locally called the **Opportunity Corridor**, that have among the worst urban poverty in the United States. FFEF is joined by a **coalition** of the City of Cleveland, the Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund, and the Cuyahoga County Land Bank. Additional public/private partners join, as well.

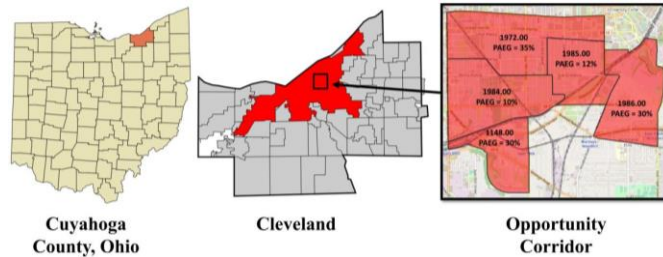
The City of Cleveland was traditionally the industrial center of the MSA, dense with thriving “walk to work” neighborhoods. In recent decades, this industrial legacy has created conditions of extreme disinvestment, hypersegregation and inequity, and in 2020 Cleveland became the nation’s poorest big city.¹ Industry has migrated outward to the suburbs and once-thriving neighborhoods have been disinvested to a staggering degree. Evidence of this disinvestment is blatant with abandoned industrial buildings permeating neighborhoods.

In 2021, a new roadway project was completed in the Opportunity Corridor with federal, state, city, and neighborhood investment creating critical infrastructure and enabling growth in this distressed area. Since completion, industrial and commercial projects have sprouted sporadically, but the transformative potential, especially the benefit to residents, needs fuel.

To accelerate industrial growth, the Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund (the Fund) - a nonprofit aligned with the Cuyahoga County Land Bank that invests in brownfield reclamation - was formed in early 2023. The City of Cleveland has committed \$50,000,000 of an estimated \$250,000,000 needed to invest in brownfields.² This application leverages this seed funding and seeks to tie together land use and growth initiatives with community development.

1. Service Region

1.1. Eligible Geography. With a Prime Age Employment Gap of 10.2 and Median Income of \$33,678, the entire City of Cleveland is eligible for Recompete funding; see attached Eligible Service Area List.³ This application targets five census tracts (shown at right) called the Opportunity Corridor.



1.2. Regional Challenges (including causes of PAEG).

Cleveland was once one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the nation. Since the 1950s, it has experienced outmigration and downsizing of industry that has crippled the city’s base of good jobs, leading to dramatic population loss and economic decline. The current population of 370,000 is approximately **one-third** of its peak of 920,000; jobs located in the city have declined by over 300,000 in the same timeframe.⁴ With a staggering 30% poverty rate, the city’s median household income (\$33,678) is less than half that of the nation’s (\$70,784).⁵ Over 20% of land in Cleveland sits vacant, with much of it unusable due to brownfield blight.⁶

The Opportunity Corridor, targeted in this application, has a total population of 13,100; **poverty rate of 50.5%**; population decline of 19% since 2010; median household income of

¹ Campbell, E. Cleveland is Now the Poorest Big City. Center for Community Solutions. Sept. 21, 2020.
² Vanisko, A. Cleveland Approves \$50 million for Site Fund. Signal Cleveland. Signal Cleveland. May 22, 2023,
³ Recompete Eligibility Mapping Tool (2023).
⁴ WKYC. Cleveland is the 5th Fastest Shrinking City in the US. August 22, 2020.
⁵ City of Cleveland (2023). Lightcast.
⁶ Palmer, K. Study finds 20% vacancy on city's 162,000 parcels. Crain’s Cleveland Business. June 15, 2023.

\$22,400; and PAEG of 24.0.⁷ 95% of residents are Black. With an enormous inventory of brownfields, these tracts are the archetype of industrial disinvestment. Bringing the Opportunity Corridor's PAEG in line with the nation would mean engaging an additional 2,500 people in employment.⁸ PAEG in the Opportunity Corridor is caused by two sets of challenges: (1) a lack of good jobs relative to the size of the available workforce, and (2) barriers that hinder individuals' readiness and availability for work. To this end, the following needs are highlighted: Job creation.

- Since 2003 in the Cleveland MSA, across all industries, job growth has been flat, and the MSA's population has declined 2%. The region is getting older as all age cohorts under 50 are declining while all cohorts above 50 are growing. Manufacturing is the region's largest GRP contributor (\$23.8B) and provides a strong basis for investment with location quotient of 1.5, and employment of 124,000 people with average entry-level pay of \$41,000.⁹ However, manufacturing jobs have declined by 35,000 since 2003 with 74% of the decline coming from Cleveland.¹⁰ Within the Opportunity Corridor itself, there are 4,500 total jobs, two-thirds of which are below the living wage threshold, compared to a Prime Age population of 6,500 people.¹¹ Job creation is needed in the MSA, Cleveland, and the Opportunity Corridor.
- Over 1,000 acres of land has been identified as vacant, available, and promising for development in the Opportunity Corridor. Much of this land has been the subject of foreclosure and sits under city or county control, making it available for immediate reinvestment. The vast majority requires brownfield remediation.



Job access via mobility, childcare, education and training.

Individuals contend with barriers that hinder their readiness and availability for work.

- Mobility. 37.6% of households in the Opportunity Corridor do not have a vehicle (vs. 19.5% in Cleveland and 8.5% in the US).¹² Public transit commutes from the target area to regional job hubs can take one to three hours each way.
- Childcare. Childcare is a staggeringly significant barrier. 42.9% of households with children in the geography are led by single parents.¹³ Local research indicates that there is only one child care slot in a high-quality-rated child care center... and none in the Opportunity Corridor.¹⁴
- Low literacy, limited work readiness. 66% of Cleveland's adults are functionally illiterate, meaning they lack the basic literacy to perform in most jobs.¹⁵ 25% of residents in the targeted area have less than a high school degree (vs. 16% in Cleveland and 11% in the US).¹⁶

⁷Opportunity Corridor. (2023). Lightcast.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Greater Cleveland MSA. (2023). Lightcast.

¹⁰ City of Cleveland and Greater Cleveland MSA. (2023). Lightcast.

¹¹ Opportunity Corridor, City of Cleveland, and US. (2023). Lightcast.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Market demand research by childcare 501c3 Starting Point, via email correspondence, September 2023.

¹⁵ Schneck, K. 2 out of 3 Clevelanders are functionally illiterate. Freshwater Cleveland. Nov 29, 2018.

¹⁶ Opportunity Corridor, City of Cleveland, and US. (2023). Lightcast.

1.3. Regional Assets for Anticipated Interventions. This initiative builds on a foundation of existing assets and resources including:

- A ready-made governance structure. The coalition members lead: a regional Inclusive Growth Collaborative that engages regional public, nonprofit, community-based organizations and philanthropies, and; the city-led Opportunity Corridor Steering Committee comprising land use, economic development, and transportation organizations.
- The City of Cleveland has committed \$50,000,000 to seed the Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund, and efforts are underway to raise an additional \$50,000,000 of the total \$250,000,000 estimated need. The Fund launched in early 2023 as the city’s flagship brownfield effort.
- The Opportunity Corridor roadway is a new three-mile boulevard that opened in 2021. It creates critical infrastructure within a historically under-served, economically depressed area.
- A rich network of workforce development initiatives serves the city, including over \$22,000,000 in leveraged federal grants for workforce training and supportive services.

Anticipated interventions are described below in Section 3.2 Workstream Descriptions and Objectives. The organizations listed in the table below have agreed to serve on the initiative’s Operating Board, which will lead the Re compete Strategy Process described further below.

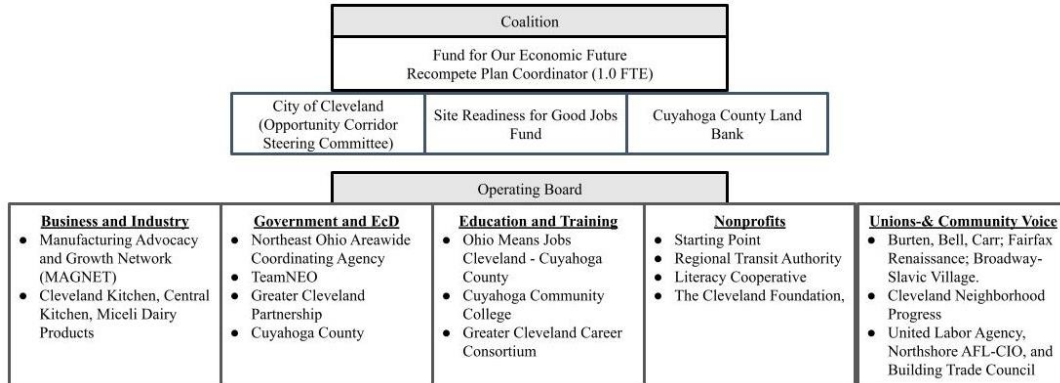
Assets and Resources		
Asset Type	Core Function	Partners/Assets
Economic Development	Regional leadership, growth initiatives, site development	Fund for Our Economic Future, Opportunity Corridor Steering Committee, TeamNEO, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (CEDS), Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund
Government	Anchor jurisdictions	City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Cuyahoga County Land Bank, Regional Transit Authority
Employers	Project beneficiaries	3,300 manufacturers employing 124,000 people; MAGNET (Manufacturing Extension), Cleveland Kitchen, Central Kitchen, Miceli Dairy Products
Labor & Workforce	Job access and career advancement	OhioMeansJobs - Cleveland/ Cuyahoga County (WIOA), Creator Cleveland Career Consortium, Cuyahoga Community College, United Labor Agency, Northshore AFL-CIO, Cleveland Building and Trade Council
Nonprofit and Philanthropic	Job access and community voice	Community Development Corporations (Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc., Fairfax Renaissance Development Corp., and Broadway-Slavic Village Development Corp.), Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Starting Point, Literacy Cooperative, The Cleveland Foundation

Additional organizations and officials that have provided letters of support are footnoted.¹⁷

2. Organizational and Leadership Capacity The Fund for Our Economic Future, a 501c3, will serve as the Lead Applicant. Founded in 2004, FFEF leads a highly influential governance network made up of funders, civic and business alliances, and government entities that collaborate to advance inclusive economic growth. Over the past 19 years, FFEF has raised and deployed over \$120,000,000 to drive equitable growth. Shown below, FFEF is joined in this application by coalition members the City of Cleveland, the Site Readiness Fund for Good Jobs, and the Cuyahoga County Land Bank. An Operating Board will support the design of a Phase 2 application, if selected. These organizations include business and industry, government and economic development, education and training, and nonprofit and community organizations.

¹⁷ Bridgeport LLC, PDC Manufacturing, re:Charge, University Hospitals, JobsOhio, Third Federal Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, United Way of Greater Cleveland, ACT Ohio, Ward 5 Councilman Richard Starr, City Council President Blaine Griffin, Ward 10 Councilman Anthony Hairston, County Council President Pernell Jones, US Representative Shontel Brown, Ohio Representative Terrence Upchurch, US Senator Sherrod Brown

The approach, to be formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding, is a Collective Impact approach incorporating a common agenda, backbone support, communication, mutually reinforcing activities, and shared measurement. The leading candidate for Recompete Plan Coordinator is Joevrose Bourdeau Small. Ms. Bourdeau Small has 8 years of experience as a project manager in urban planning and real estate development, as an Equal Opportunity Specialist for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and as staff for the Boston Planning and Development Agency.



3. Potential to Increase Prime-Age Employment Opportunities

Traditional place-based economic development has not served Cleveland effectively.¹⁸ As such, this application takes a new approach by aligning services for job creation and job access.

3.1. Planning Strategy. With EDA support, the coalition will engage in a two-phased process to create strategies that will (1) increase cohesiveness as an EDA Recompete collaboration, and (2) prepare the coalition and partners for an Implementation Grant under Phase 2 funding.

Phase 1: Predevelopment learning. Preliminary information will inform the process.

Activities will incorporate stakeholder voice, especially underrepresented voices, and include benchmarking existing initiatives, mapping assets, and identifying gaps.

Phase 2: Project planning/development. As Phase 1 progresses, participants will engage in design sessions to establish plans for Recompete projects. A collaborative process will ensure needs, opportunities, and synergies are identified.

The strategic planning process will focus on the following principles to promote stakeholder engagement and inclusive economic growth across all activities:

- **Durable Governance.** Coalition leadership will implement approaches for coordination, dynamic facilitation, and conflict-resolution among members.
- **Strengthening Regional Partnerships.** The process will include partnership expansion, asset activation, and regional initiative integration to achieve objectives across all projects.
- **Systems for Improving Inclusive Excellence.** Coalition leaders will thread inclusive excellence, incorporating underrepresented voices and setting goals and metrics that will inform the development of projects.

3.2. Workstream Descriptions and Objectives. Within the process, two work streams will focus on the development of projects that address the causes of regional PAEG.

Workstream 1: Job creation via site development. Led by the Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund, partners will plan to develop publicly-owned sites for industrial use. Preliminary sites include 350 acres suitable for small and medium-sized manufacturers. The sites will create new

¹⁸ Bartik, Timothy J. 2020. "Place-Based Policy: An Essay in Two Parts." Policy Paper No. 2020-021. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. <https://doi.org/10.17848/pol2020-021>

capacity for an estimated 25 companies creating 8,750 direct jobs within five years (and 14,000 indirect jobs). Returns from development will be recycled into more properties.

High level objectives for this workstream include:

- Assess site readiness/ needs leading to final selection.
- Engage businesses around site utilization leveraging existing incentive and loan programs.
- Determine cost estimates and timelines.
- Determine approaches to ensure returns are recycled into more properties.



Workstream 2: Ensure job access via training, childcare, and transportation initiatives.

In service of job access at the developed sites, initiatives will be planned that center on literacy, childcare, and mobility. Three work groups are envisioned:

- **Mobility:** A Mobility Initiative will be developed to extend existing public transit coverage and create new transportation solutions for residents of the Opportunity Corridor, including new ride share options during times of low public ridership such as night shift, and non-vehicular commuting capabilities.
- **Childcare:** Starting Point will create new childcare capacity from birth through school age via startups and expansions by providing training, licensing and credentialing support, workforce development and hiring support, and ongoing technical assistance leading to 1,000 new childcare slots.
- **Literacy:** New capacity for no-cost basic education and job readiness will be developed in the Opportunity Corridor for 1,000 community members, leading to GED® and HiSET® completion. Literacy programs will be contextualized and integrated into existing workforce development pathways.
- **Community Investment Trust (CIT):** Modeled on an initiative in Echo Park, CA, an innovative CIT will be established to help residents grow long-term wealth by building equity in commercial real estate located in their own neighborhoods.

High level objectives for this workstream include:

- Design approaches that will lead to barrier mitigation in the intended domain.
- Build networks and interactions among providers, businesses, funders, and partners.
- Extensively engage organizations that support equity and voice of the community.

4. Efficiency and Appropriateness of Project Budget

FFEF is requesting \$500,000 over an 18-month performance period. The Budget Narrative provides an account of costs. It is based on targeted needs for planning and project development.

Budget Item	Function	Amount
Fund for Our Economic Future (Lead Applicant)	Governance lead coordinating Coalition and Operating Board. Responsible for coordination of planning process. Staffing Recompete Plan Coordinator and Director of Impact and Insights to support evaluation design.	\$339,971.66
Contracted Support	Funding for partner organizations supporting Community Outreach & Engagement, Targeted Planning for Childcare, and Community Investment Trust, Strategic Implementation Planning	\$160,000
Total		\$499,971.66