

Industry Clusters

Industry Clusters are groups of firms working in the same or related industries, that gain a competitive advantage through scale, local proximity, and interdependence. The result is greater than the sum of its parts, where the cluster generates new growth that in turn strengthens the cluster further and leads to compound growth.



The Benefits

Industry clusters produce a wide range of benefits for individual companies and for the industry as a whole.

- Diverse, local supply chain
- Robust labor market
- Tech and knowledge transfer
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Strengthened competitiveness
- Entrepreneur support
- Priority advocacy efforts
- Comprehensive infrastructure

Polymer Industry Cluster Initiative

The Polymer Industry Cluster Initiative was launched at the start of 2021 to conduct a deeper examination of the region's polymer industry and develop a framework to achieve its full potential. The goal of this work is to elevate Northeast Ohio's polymer industry into a truly dynamic enterprise that is better positioned for strong, sustainable growth in an ever-changing global economy.

Polymer Industry Cluster

The polymer industry is comprised of companies involved in the manufacture of chemicals, plastics, and elastomer products. The cluster is generally considered to be the collection of three different types of organizations operating within Northeast Ohio:



Polymer Industry Companies



Supply Chain of the Polymer Industry



Range of Polymer Support Organizations

Contact

Brian Anderson, Senior Director of Research
banderson@greaterakronchamber.org





2021 Accomplishments and Milestones

Commissioned a Feasibility Study

With the support of our staff, an industry expert conducted a year-long feasibility study. The study showed significant potential for creating an active polymer cluster and catalyzing substantial new economic growth. Although polymer industry assets are mostly concentrated in Akron MSA, significant ones are also found throughout the Canton, Cleveland and Youngstown areas. Thus, this polymer industry cluster can be considered a Northeast Ohio cluster.

Established a Polymer Industry Advisory Council

The Polymer Industry Advisory Council was created with the aim of articulating an industry-led vision, set of goals, and growth strategy. The council currently includes over 35 representatives from more than 25 polymer-related companies and institutions in the region and is growing quickly. During the year, the council generated a shared vision, a mission statement and distinct development projects addressing challenges to achieving the cluster's goals. Moreover, it helped fill our cluster's gap in central leadership and activated ongoing cluster engagement.

Assessed Shared Industry Challenges

The Polymer Industry Advisory Council created a list of shared challenges and ecosystem gaps that will advance collective problem solving with the significant potential of producing industry growth. To begin tackling these challenges on a deeper level in 2022, the council advanced plans to organize four working groups (in the following areas): workforce, research, start-ups/entrepreneur support, and supply chain.

Identified New Opportunities

Through our own research and the work of the council, we identified global opportunities for the polymer industry cluster. We initiated distinct development projects, pursued opportunities for outside funding, designed a recommended roadmap for investment and engagement in the next few years and started to represent our local polymer industry cluster among other industry clusters in the country.

Finalist in the EDA Build Back Regional Challenge

On behalf of Northeast Ohio's manufacturing sector and polymer industry, the GAC and MAGNET together with smaller partners submitted a collaborative proposal to the EDA's Build Back Better Regional Challenge. Ours was selected as one of 60 finalists out of 529 total submissions. As such, we received a \$500,000 grant for technical assistance in refining the final proposal, due March 2022.



Polymer Industry Cluster Vision

Our vision for the cluster is a global focal point for the polymer industry and its supply chain, providing access to an unparalleled industry network of thought-leaders, producers, and innovators. We are committed to convening, connecting, and showcasing polymer companies because it enables growth and innovation, solidifying Northeast Ohio as a global center in Polymers.

2022 Plans

This year, an investment in the Polymer Cluster Initiative will allow us to continue convening on behalf of the cluster to solve shared problems, conduct research, and improve ecosystem navigation.

Expand PIAC from 25 to 50+ advisors; facilitate monthly meetings

Create & facilitate working groups for key areas of development

Pursue opportunities for outside funding to drive growth in the cluster

Develop communication tools for the NEO Polymer Industry Cluster

Retain responsive, connected ecosystem POC to help accomplish goals

Investing in the Future of Polymers

Building a cluster of any kind requires time, investment, and engagement. Our research indicates that there is high potential for a strong polymers cluster in this region, but the future is in the hands of industry leaders. We are seeking companies who are willing to invest financially, with their time and their expertise.