



GREATER AKRON CHAMBER

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



At the Greater Akron Chamber, our work over the last five years has been focused on re-defining the support we provide to our members and investors in our work and improving the partnerships and collaborations that can help drive regional growth. And, as we look ahead to 2023, we find ourselves:

**Back to normal, and focused on clear challenges.**

We don't think about COVID every day anymore. The pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities among our businesses and underlined disparities within our economy. It has also motivated a stronger focus on new ideas about the vibrancy of our downtowns and neighborhoods, how we address new workforce and talent dynamics and a demand for policy that supports business growth.

**Better positioned to support you.** We have launched successful new resources for our members' businesses, refreshed a number of programs and resources and just stopped doing some things that didn't matter. We have changed the way we connect, communicate and convene in support of your success and the region's growth.

**Focused on winning more, for Greater Akron.** We can lead on global solutions for advanced polymers. We can capitalize on the quality of life in our region to attract and retain talent. We can help our entrepreneurs and owners grow faster and get bigger. We can get more than our "fair share" of resources for the people and businesses of our region. And, we can increase the economic opportunity for every resident in our region.

**Grateful to our members, investors and partners.** Your increased investment in our work and trust in our efforts allow us to do more, for more, with stronger partnerships and greater confidence.

We hope you share our optimism for the opportunities ahead and will continue to push us, invest in us and stand with us to work together to create a Greater Akron.



**Tia Ramlow**  
Chair, Board of Directors



**Steve Millard**  
President & CEO

# ABOUT US

GAC works on behalf of the business community to deliver direct support to businesses of all sizes and bring business community perspective and involvement to the work of the economic development ecosystem to catalyze investment, economic growth and employment for Greater Akron.

# STRATEGIES

## 01

Address Greater Akron's workforce and talent issues through increased employer engagement and improved ecosystem alignment.

## 02

Activate employers to improve Greater Akron as a destination for business and industry growth with a specific focus on downtown revitalization and the growth of the Polymer Industry Cluster.

## 03

Advance the growth of businesses by making it easier to do business, access help, and connect to other leaders.

## 04

Advance inclusive economic growth in Greater Akron by supporting disadvantaged business growth, connectivity, corporate awareness and action.

## 05

Establish an ongoing understanding of business and community needs and represent those to policymakers to drive change and investment.



# STRENGTHENING

## Business Growth & Success

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**311**

### Business Retention & Expansion Engagements

as part of the Elevate Greater Akron collaborative efforts to understand business needs and connect them with opportunities for growth and business assistance.

**37%**  
Disadvantaged Businesses

**\$152M**

### In Payroll

created and retained in Summit, Portage, and Medina counties through business retention and attraction projects.

**68**  
Completed Projects

**2,433**

### Jobs Created

in Summit, Portage, and Medina counties through business retention and attraction projects.

**2,360**  
Jobs Retained

## GREATER AKRON BUSINESS NAVIGATOR LAUNCHED

GAC was on point on behalf of the Elevate Greater Akron collaborative to launch the Greater Akron Business Navigator to serve the region's startup, small and scale-up businesses – providing a virtual front door to our extensive business ecosystem. The goal of the Business Navigator is to help businesses access sources of help and support more effectively and efficiently. This tool provides access to 60 ecosystem partners and over 200 resources.

[VISIT HERE](#)

**INCREASED  
MEMBERSHIP TO  
2,162**

**INCREASED  
INVESTMENT BY  
12%**

allowing for strengthened capacity to deliver on strategies to benefit the business community and region

## GAC EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FOR SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMPANIES

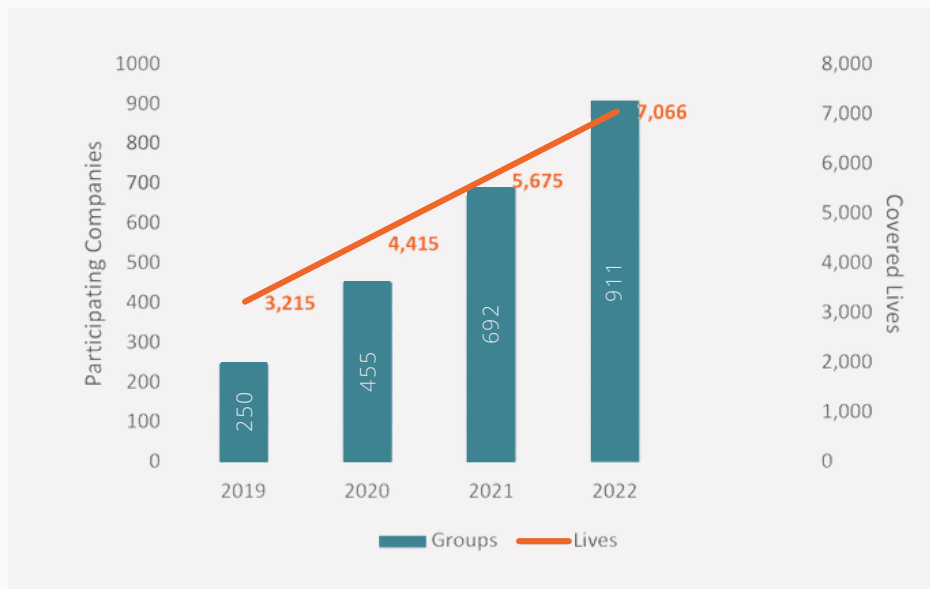


Reducing risk, cost and complexity



Increasing ability to attract and retain employees

### GAC HEALTH BENEFIT PROGRAM



### MULTIPLE EMPLOYER 401K

**\$14.5M**

401k Plan Assets

**110%**

Year/Year  
Increase



### Defeated

HB 135, legislation that would have raised healthcare costs for employers.



### Facilitated

the distribution of an additional \$1 million in small business relief through the 2022 City of Akron (ARPA) Small Business Relief Grant Program.



### Convened

4,406 owners and leaders across 765 businesses through 58 events and programs.

# ADVANCING

## Economic Inclusion and Opportunity

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- 1** Advocated for **improvements to state certification for minority business enterprises**, women-owned business enterprises, and veteran-friendly business enterprises. Following the passage of GAC-proposed legislation (SB 105) and related efforts to amend various administrative rules, **political subdivisions must now provide reciprocal recognition** for state certifications and the application process has been streamlined.
- 2** Convened **365 female leaders** through the **Women's Network Leadership Institute** Leadership Dialogue Series to strengthen networks, increase access and share insights.
- 3** Advanced equity and opportunity through access to the **Diversity Assessment** for **45 companies**. These companies received a customized assessment of their organization's equity and diversity profile, with recommendations and resources on ways to advance equity and inclusion in the workplace.

# DRIVING

## Collaborative Regional Investment

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**\$544,000**

invested into the Polymer Industry Cluster work through regional partners and companies

**40**

leaders committed to industry advocacy and leadership as part of the Polymer Industry Advisory Council

## Innovation Hub Funding

Advocacy efforts for investment in Greater Akron's Polymer Industry Cluster are creating impact evident in Governor DeWine's 2023 State of the State address, as he announced his intention to invest \$150 million in new Innovation Hubs in mid-sized Ohio cities. This announcement follows nearly a year of efforts from the Greater Akron Chamber and partner organizations making the case for state support of the Polymer Industry Cluster, to fund priority development projects.

## Where Are the Workers?

2022 brought the completion of "Where Are the Workers?," a multi-part analysis of Northeast Ohio's changing talent landscape led by the Fund for Our Economic Future, ConxusNEO, PolicyBridge, the Summit and Medina Workforce Area Council of Governments, and Team NEO. Surveys and focus groups gathered perspectives from more than 5,000 Northeast Ohioans (2,400 in Summit, Medina and Portage Counties) and 900+ employers (254 in Summit, Medina and Portage Counties) between December 2021 and July 2022. This report synthesizes findings and lays the groundwork for what employers, policymakers, workforce practitioners, economic developers, and others can do to strengthen workplaces, build economic resiliency, and improve talent strategies that work for today's workforce.

[READ MORE](#)



## ConxusNEO + GAC

**ConxusNEO** aligned operations more closely with the Chamber to leverage workforce initiatives and strengthen connectivity to meet the needs of employers.



## Capital Bill Funding

GAC Capital Bill recommendations adopted bringing **\$2.4 million** in investment to Greater Akron through the state capital bill, resulting in the funding of 7 recommended projects.



## ODOD Investments

Awarded **\$350,000** in grants and support from Ohio Department of Development to advance Polymer Industry Cluster workforce efforts and to continue ConxusNEO's work in support of the healthcare, technology and manufacturing industry sector partnerships.



## Good Jobs Challenge

ConxusNEO was awarded **\$1 million** through the Good Jobs Challenge through the US Economic Development Administration as a three-year investment to recruit, train and place almost 400 individuals into manufacturing positions.



**GAC**  
GREATER AKRON CHAMBER



# THANK YOU

for your continued  
support of our work



## Website

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# CHAIR'S CIRCLE INVESTORS

Akron Children's Hospital  
Akron Community Foundation  
Apple Growth Partners  
AT&T  
Bober Markey Fedorovich  
Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations  
Brouse McDowell  
Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs  
CBIZ Mayer Hoffman McCann  
Charles Schwab  
Cleveland Clinic Akron General  
City of Akron  
County of Summit  
Continental  
Dominion Energy  
Energy Harbor  
Ernst & Young  
FedEx Custom Critical  
Fifth Third Bank  
FirstEnergy Corp.  
GAR Foundation  
GOJO  
Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company  
GPD Group  
Great Work Employment  
Huntington Bank  
JP Morgan Chase & Co.  
JW Didado Electric  
Kent State University  
KeyBank  
MAGNET  
Medical Mutual  
Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED)  
Pleasant Valley Corporation – NAI Pleasant Valley  
PNC Bank  
Roetzel & Andres  
Sikich  
Spectrum  
State & Federal Communications  
Summa Health  
TeamNEO  
The University of Akron  
United Way Summit and Medina  
Welty  
Westfield Bank  
WGU Ohio