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Polymer Industry Cluster Selected for \$51 Million Federal Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub Phase 2 Investment

Akron, OH – The Polymer Industry Cluster, a collaboration of private and public partners focused on innovation and investment opportunities for the region’s legacy materials industry powered by the Greater Akron Chamber, has been named the recipient of a \$51 million federal investment as part of the EDA Tech Hubs Phase 2 awards. The Polymer Industry Cluster is one of 12 award recipients nationally. These funds will be used to advance a hub of innovation, growth and investment for the United States focused on sustainable polymers. This work will create differentiated strategic advantage in sustainable polymers for the U.S. and jobs, growth and investment for the region.

The federal award will be matched with approximately \$7 million of partner investment, to bring a total of more than \$58 million across seven technology innovation, workforce and cluster coordination projects as a part of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub’s work. This award follows the Polymer Industry Cluster’s designation by the EDA as the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub and corresponding \$400,000 strategy development grant award in October 2023.

The region’s award by the EDA signifies a milestone in the Polymer Industry Cluster’s efforts and serves as a catalytic moment for innovation and research in this industry. Having been launched just three years ago, the Polymer Industry Cluster has experienced significant growth and momentum in every way possible – from the engagement of industry and ecosystem partners to the collaboration and investment on projects and strategies. This award recognizes these achievements and will enable the commercialization of new technologies that can have global impact.

With over 150 polymer-related manufacturing companies in the Akron MSA alone, and more than 500 across Northeast Ohio, this award strengthens the foothold that Greater Akron has as THE place for sustainable polymers research, innovation and collaboration. The technologies represented in this proposal are fundamental to the next wave of industry innovation and capitalize on Greater Akron’s legacy as the Rubber City. Federal funding will leverage private sector and community investments to bring key technology and industry capacity building initiatives to fruition.

The proposal’s focus on driving the final stage of research and development for technology projects that represent significant advances in sustainable materials was intentional. The key technology projects are led by collaborations of industry partners that are at the last stage of development and can bring their programs to market to create impact in the near term. This is the strategy that will fuel future growth and the proposal doubled down on this as a focus.

Key technology projects funded by this award will focus on 1) Commercializing Recycling End-of-Life Tires; 2) the Development of Sustainable Polymer Composites via Liquid Phase Mixing; 3) Manufacturing of Sustainable Bio-based Butadiene for Green Synthetic Rubber; 4) Advancing Formulation of Carbon Nanotube-based Polymer Composites; and 5) the development of safer Antidegradants for Tires and Plastics.

Company leadership for this work will come from a broad group of industry leaders and partners including Full Circle Technologies, The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., BioVerde, Huntsman International, Flexsys, Bridgestone, Continental, Parker Hannifin, Synthomer, Promerus, and more.

In addition to driving new technologies, funding will also be used to advance a number of workforce development initiatives with our educational institutions including The University of Akron, Kent State University, Case Western Reserve University, Stark State College, and Central State University, and workforce partners to expand the region's sustainability talent pipeline at all skill levels and facilitating placement into good jobs. Support will also be provided to the Polymer Industry Cluster collaborative, facilitated by the Greater Akron Chamber, who will continue to coordinate this work and grow involvement in the Polymer Industry Cluster by local, national and international companies that can bring jobs and investment to Greater Akron.

The technology and industry development catalyzed by this award are expected to result in the removal of millions of tons of carbon dioxide annually and development of new solutions that can have less impact on the environmental ecosystem. In addition, the technology innovation to be created will support the attraction of new businesses, talent, and investment capital resulting in over 4,000 jobs created or retained, over \$1 billion of potential private investment in expanded production capacity and \$5 billion in total economic impact for Northeast Ohio.

As is the case for the Polymer Industry Cluster generally, the proposal and subsequent award was strengthened and made possible due to the support, investment, engagement, and activity of hundreds of for-profit industry leaders, not-for-profit economic development partners and local, state and federal appointed and elected officials. This award is not just a win for the Polymer Industry Cluster, but also for the region and all the partners and leaders who made this a possibility.

About the US EDA Tech Hubs Program

The Tech Hubs Program will invest directly in regions with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to transform into globally competitive innovation centers in approximately 10 years, while catalyzing the creation of good jobs for American workers at all skill levels, equitably and inclusively.

The Tech Hubs Program was enacted as part of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (as the Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs program). The statute authorized \$10 billion for the program over five years. As part of the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congress appropriated EDA \$500 million to launch the program. This program invests in U.S. regions that are focused on technologies within or across the key technology focus areas outlined in the statute.

For more information on the Polymer Industry Cluster, visit greaterakronchamber.org.

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About the Greater Akron Chamber

The Greater Akron Chamber is a business membership and economic development organization serving Summit, Medina, and Portage counties. The Greater Akron Chamber drives economic growth and prosperity for the region by supporting the success of the business community and acting as a convener of stakeholders on key issues facing Greater Akron.



Serving Medina, Portage & Summit Counties

Driving Economic Growth & Prosperity | Supporting the Success of the Business Community | Convening Stakeholders on Key Issues Facing the Region

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About the Polymer Industry Cluster

The Polymer Industry Cluster Initiative was launched in 2021 to conduct a deeper examination of the region's polymer industry and develop a framework to leverage its full potential. Powered by the Greater Akron Chamber, the Polymer Industry Cluster works 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.



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