



## Greater Akron Polymer Innovation Hub

### Overview

Dozens of Polymer Industry Cluster partners in Greater Akron have collaborated to leverage work done in the consortium to seek state funding to **establish an innovation hub to drive economic growth** from existing strengths in advanced materials. Together, these partners seek to accelerate impactful industry-driven R&D, support the commercialization of new innovations, and support workforce development efforts to **fuel industry growth with regional talent**.

### Problem Statement

While polymers and advanced materials play critical roles in virtually every industry, and in many cases present the biggest technical barriers to addressing large-scale societal and economic challenges, innovation in this space is time consuming and capital intensive. The result is that progress is slow without dedicated and significant resources.

Establishing a well-funded and well-connected innovation hub will accelerate scientific and technological advances that will leverage existing strengths to position the Polymer Industry Cluster as a leader at the forefront of some of the most impactful and high-growth trends.



### Scope

The Polymer Industry Cluster's innovation priorities fit into five categories: **mobility, healthcare, semiconductors, industrial materials and energy**. Additional priorities for enhancing the Greater Akron ecosystem include improved innovation infrastructure, supporting start-up companies delivering impactful solutions to the polymer industry, strengthening and diversifying the talent pipeline, and sustaining and growing the work of the Polymer Industry Cluster consortium.

### Timeline of Events

**In early 2021**, industry leaders and partners came together to form the Polymer Industry Cluster. We understood this effort would require a \$200 million investment over a decade to take us from where we are today to where we know we can be: **a well-oiled machine of continuous, compound economic growth and game-changing innovation**.

**In 2022**, the Polymer Industry Cluster **established its committee structure** for consortium partners to identify priority gaps and design development projects to address those needs.

**In October 2023**, the Greater Akron region was designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce as **the Sustainable Polymer Tech Hub of the United States**.

**In January 2024**, **the Polymer Industry Cluster Leadership Committee** was established as a formal governing and decision-making body for the Polymer Industry Cluster. Comprised of over a dozen partners from industry, higher-ed, government, economic development, and philanthropy, this Leadership Committee ensures that the consortium's partners are directly engaged in setting direction and priorities for the work.

**In July 2024**, the Polymer Industry Cluster was awarded **\$51 million in federal funding** as part of the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Tech Hubs Phase 2 awards, to be matched by \$7 million in local investment.

**In September 2024**, the Polymer Industry Cluster was awarded **\$31.25 million through Ohio's Innovation Hubs Program** to support the *Greater Akron Polymer Innovation Hub* project, to be matched by \$10.4 million in local investment.

## Greater Akron Polymer Innovation Hub Investment Focus

Polymer Industry Cluster partners have worked for over three years together to identify priority challenges and opportunities to address together, and correspondingly identified the following areas of investment focus.

While there is still work to do with the Polymer Industry Cluster Leadership Committee in finalizing the exact amounts of investment by project category, the following overview reflects the priorities of the consortium and reflects the total **\$42 million** Innovation Hub award (i.e., **\$31.3 million** from the State of Ohio and **\$10.4 million** in partner matching funds) that will be deployed over a four-year period:



### \$25M

#### Polymer Pilot Plant

A transformational, marquee construction project providing shared access facilities and equipment to enable scaling of innovative new materials and technologies that address critical industry needs. This facility will enable innovators, including researchers and startups, to bring impactful materials to market, including making large quantities of new material, prototyping, and robust evaluation.



### \$8M

#### Industry-Driven R&D Priorities

Undertaking important R&D projects to solve persistent challenges that broadly affect industry partners. Projects fit into five industry sector categories, each with sustainability as a common theme. These categories are: mobility, healthcare, electronics/semiconductors, industrial materials, and energy. These R&D undertakings promise to build our consortium's innovation pipeline to catalyze growth for its partners and the region.



### \$5M

#### Polymer Startup Programming

A game-changing opportunity to identify, recruit, and nurture the growth of high-potential startup companies bringing impactful and innovative solutions to market to address big challenges and opportunities in the polymer industry.



### \$2M

#### PIC Infrastructure, Staffing, Activities

Implementing a strong team to provide leadership, technical expertise, project management, coordination, compliance, and other critical functions on behalf of the consortium. The leadership team will facilitate and support consortium activities, drive the most effective use and management of state and partner investments, and continue to drive investment and capital in the long-term work of the Innovation Hub.



### \$2M

#### Workforce Development

Work will focus on intentional outreach and recruitment of under-represented and under-employed residents into attractive education, training, and employment opportunities. This also requires creative, intentional communications to overcome perceptions of employment in the polymer and advanced materials industry.

## About the Ohio Innovation Hubs Program

In 2023, the State of Ohio appropriated approximately \$125 million to the Ohio Department of Development to fund the Ohio Innovation Hubs Program. These funds were appropriated to support innovative activities that capitalize on various region's unique high growth opportunities and grow local economies. Eligible uses include (1) capital expenses to establish an innovation hub near research-oriented anchor institutions, (2) providing research and development opportunities within an innovation hub, or (3) creating new or preserving existing jobs and employment opportunities.