

Erie County Investment Playbook

ECGRA Board Briefing

Funding Support Summary

Introduction

The recent historic increase in competitive funding from the federal government has created an unprecedented opportunity for equitable economic development. In Erie County, the need for revitalization is as profound as the opportunity. In response to this unique moment, Erie community leaders have come together to form **Erie Inclusive Recovery**. This collaborative initiative will strive to connect opportunity to need by bringing together funding and knowledge.

This initiative will take a **collective impact** approach. Such initiatives often involve a shared agenda, shared measurements, and a dedicated staff – all working toward a common commitment. Erie Inclusive Recovery's cross-sector approach will help all of those involved to achieve more together than they could on their own. Instead of working in silos, committed Erie stakeholders will apply their efforts to shared goals:

- Fostering economic growth
- Promoting neighborhoods
- Creating a vibrant, diversified economy that benefits all

Specifically, the initiative will help organize disparate public, private and civic stakeholders around a common vision of Erie County's success.

Erie County COVID-19 Report, July 2021

In January 2021, ECGRA is appointed by County Council to facilitate the Economic Impact and COVID Revitalization Committee (EICRC). Members of the committee were selected to assist in gathering data, listening sessions held over zoom, and recruiting expert testimony. Four months and sixteen meeting later, the committee heard from stakeholders across Erie County representing local government, business, nonprofits, and civic leaders. Research and listening sessions yield a series of recommendations. The report concluded by calling on our local leaders to get organized through experts that could get us ready for the flood of federal dollars being proposed by the federal and state governments.

Initial ECGRA Investment - \$25,000 to support The Investment Playbook

Interested in identifying ways to support Erie County's opportunities for growth, the ECGRA, Erie Insurance, the Jefferson Educational Society (JES) and The Erie Community Foundation (ECF) partnered to commission the Erie Inclusive Recovery Investment Playbook in September 2021. The playbook was created by Bruce Katz and Florian Schalliol of New Localism Associates. The playbook is intended to serve as a tool to help Erie organize effectively, seeking federal dollars for local projects that will benefit the entire community.

The result was a proposed strategic plan including a series of transformational investments and a guide for Erie to leverage maximum funding. The investments are based on five principal dimensions/goals:

- Entrepreneurship
- Innovation
- Community regeneration
- Workforce development
- Infrastructure

These investments (as proposed by New Localism Associates) were the result of stakeholder meetings. They were reviewed and revised by the steering committee. As this initiative continues to respond to Erie County's changing needs, this playbook will act as a living document – the result of expertise drawn from active individuals and organizations.

ECGRA's Role

- ECGRA facilitated Erie County's first COVID-19 Impact Task Force and subsequently published the first impact report of the subject.
- ECGRA is a partner and funder on the creation of the Investment Playbook known as Erie Inclusive Recovery.
- ECGRA's executive director serves on the Playbook's Steering Committee.
- It is in ECGRA's interest to promote alignment with investment priorities, so projects are not competing for limited local resources.
- The Playbook is aligned with ECGRA's funding priorities including the Transformative Grant Program funded through ARPA.

- Also essential is an initial investment the Nerve Center, a the structure that will convene disparate players around a common agenda and facilitate delivery of prioritized investments.

Recommendations

- **Staff Recommendation:** ECGRA should continue to serve on the Playbook Steering Committee with the other funders of Erie County.
- **Staff Recommendation:** Fund the NERVE Center at a level not to exceed \$81,000 per year for 2 years. 81k is one third of the cost. The other partners at this same level are ECF and Erie Insurance. Total ECGRA Funding: \$162,000. After that, future support should be reviewed by ECGRA based on established performance metrics.
- **Staff Recommendation:** Fund projects in the Playbook consistent with ARPA funding goals, ECGRA's annual grant programs, and MRIs in support of collective impact projects.

Playbook Steering Committee

To meet the ambitious investment goals laid out by the Playbook, this initiative and the organizations that support it agree to work towards a shared agenda.

The steering committee is the decision-making body and is made up of early stakeholders, most of whom were interviewees for the original playbook. As a microcosm of broad community interests, representation will continue to expand. Participants currently include:

- The City of Erie (Mayor Joe Schember and Renee Lamis, Chief of Staff)
- Erie County Government (CE Brenton Davies and Doug Smith, Dir of Admin)
- Erie Insurance (Christina Marsh, Chief Community & Economic Development Officer)
- The Erie Community Foundation (Karen Bilowith, President)
- Erie County DEI Commission (Gary Lee, CEO)
- Jefferson Educational Society (Ferki Ferati, President)
- Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership (James Grunke, President/CEO)
- Erie County Gaming and Revenue Authority (Perry Wood, Executive Director)

This committee will continue to meet regularly as the initiative progresses.

Delivery Teams

To promote representation of multiple organizations, and to promote targeted efforts and discussions, the Playbook also includes a series of delivery teams. Each team focuses on implementing the prioritized projects, aligning resources, and coordinating/launching the projects. The delivery teams include a plethora of organizations.

Support Staff/Administration

A Director, will report to the steering committee and assist that committee in organizing projects, exploring financial and funding packages, and aligning priorities with allocation of federal funding.

The Playbook will be administered through a fiscal agency agreement with The Nonprofit Partnership (NPP). The Director will be an NPP employee.