



# BUILD BACK BETTER REGIONAL CHALLENGE AWARDEE PROFILES



*The project narratives included in this document are based on applicant submitted materials.  
The final EDA-approved scope of work may differ.*

**The Build Back Better Regional Challenge is investing in emerging industries across the economy, including:**

- **5 biotechnology and health clusters**
  - Accelerate NC – Life Sciences Manufacturing (North Carolina)
  - Advanced Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Cluster Growth Project (Virginia)
  - Build Back Better Regional Challenge – Southern New Hampshire (New Hampshire)
  - Building the Oklahoma Biotech Innovation Cluster (Oklahoma)
  - The St. Louis Regional Tech Triangle: Building and Advanced Manufacturing Cluster and Related Industries (Missouri, Illinois)
  
- **4 advanced mobility hubs, from autonomous and electric vehicles to advanced aerospace manufacturing**
  - Driving Adoption: Smart Manufacturing Technologies (Kansas)
  - Reclaiming Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing Dominance through Frontier Technologies (Texas)
  - The Detroit Regional Mobility Cluster (Michigan)
  - Tulsa Regional Advanced Mobility Corridor (Oklahoma)
  
- **4 clusters reinventing their natural resource and agricultural industries**
  - Alaska Mariculture Cluster – Developing a viable and sustainable mariculture industry for the long-term benefit of Alaska’s economy, environment and communities (Alaska)
  - Build Back Better with Mass Timber (Oregon, Washington)
  - Fresno-Merced Future of Food Initiative (California)
  - The Heartland Robotics Cluster (Nebraska)
  
- **4 communities developing next-generation manufacturing clusters**
  - Building Central Florida’s Semiconductor Cluster for Broad-Based Prosperity (Florida)
  - Georgia AI Manufacturing Pilot Facility and Technology Corridor (Georgia)
  - Southwestern Pennsylvania New Economy Collaborative to Catalyze Regional Prosperity through Robotic and Artificial Intelligence Adoption, Upskilling, and Commercialization (Pennsylvania)
  - Vision for Western New York’s Advanced Manufacturing Cluster: Scaling up the region’s existing advanced manufacturing strategies through innovation, workforce development, and infrastructure (New York)
  
- **3 coalitions driving key segments of the clean energy economy**
  - Appalachian Climate Technologies Initiative (West Virginia)
  - H2theFuture: A Transformative Energy Cluster Strategy to Decarbonize the South Louisiana Industrial Corridor (Louisiana)
  - New Energy New York (New York)
  
- **1 multi-state Tribal coalition growing an Indigenous finance industry**

- Mountain Plains Regional Indigenous Finance Industry (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming)

## Alaska

**[The Alaska Mariculture Cluster](#), led by Southeast Conference, will receive approximately \$49 million to catalyze a sustainable mariculture industry, producing shellfish and seaweed for the long-term benefit of Alaska's economy, environment, and communities.**

Following a five-year planning journey, Alaska's emerging mariculture industry – grounded in the region's abundant coastlines and existing labor force – is well positioned to meet international and domestic private interest in this sector. However, it has lacked the initial, catalytic investment needed to ensure those resources do not flow elsewhere. EDA funding will support a collection of complementary projects designed across the value chain and in partnership with Sealaska, an Alaska Native Corporation owned by more than 23,000 Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian shareholders, ensuring the cluster's approach centers the priorities of tribal, rural, and other underserved communities. These projects include **Equipment & Technology for Seed Supply, Processing, and Regulatory Testing** to solve the nursery/hatchery supply and demand challenge, and a **Revolving Loan Fund** to support business expansion — with approximately half of the total loan amount targeted towards Indigenous and rural populations. Other projects include workforce development efforts (e.g., cooperative programs with the region's tribes), and R&D funding to grow innovative seaweed and shellfish products.

## California

**[The Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation \(F3\) coalition](#), led by the Central Valley Community Foundation, will receive approximately \$65.1 million to accelerate the integration of technology and skills in the region's agriculture industry—improving productivity and job quality for existing farmworkers while driving a more resilient and sustainable food system.**

The coalition unites partners such as University of California, Merced, the California Farmworkers Foundation, industry leadership like the California Fresh Fruit Association, regional philanthropy, and local government around a vision for a more innovative, equitable, and resilient agricultural industry in one of the country's most important food-producing regions. Today, California's Central Valley produces 25 percent of the nation's food supply yet has one of the highest food insecurity rates among low wage farm workers. EDA funding will launch **iCREATE**, a new ag-tech hub, with the mission to accelerate the development and transfer of technology between researchers at local universities and farmers across the region, with a focus on reaching BIPOC or underserved small farmers. At the same time, community colleges throughout the Central Valley will receive access to new technology and training to equip workers with the skills needed to access higher quality, higher paying jobs in ag-tech—improving both farm productivity and wages.

## Florida

**[Building Central Florida's Semiconductor Cluster for Broad-Based Prosperity](#), a coalition led by the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners, will receive approximately \$50.8**

**million to accelerate the growth of the specialized semiconductor cluster at NeoCITY, a 5,000-area technology park developed in partnership with the state of Florida.**

The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on tourism in Central Florida emphasized the need to diversify the economy. Through existing investments at NeoCITY, the region has targeted low-volume, highly customized semiconductor products that would supply nearby aerospace, defense, and medical industries. EDA funding will significantly upgrade the capabilities at the **Center for NeoVation** advanced manufacturing facility, allowing it to expand research and development and production. Further funding will create a “digital twin” of the facility at the University of Central Florida, allowing real-time analysis and increasing efficiency of the production process. Additional projects will align education and training with needs of semiconductor manufacturers and support the ongoing development of the cluster and coalition at NeoCITY. EDA’s seed investments in these public assets supporting semiconductor manufacturing in Central Florida lay the groundwork for a reshoring of the industry.

## **Georgia**

**[The Georgia AI Manufacturing \(GA-AM\) coalition](#), led by the Georgia Tech Research Corporation, will receive approximately \$65 million to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence across the state’s legacy industrial sectors.**

With the coronavirus pandemic’s acute impact on global supply chains, there is renewed urgency for reshoring critical manufacturing activities. The coalition recognizes artificial intelligence (AI) will soon be a ubiquitous feature of any successful manufacturer. The GA-AM coalition will establish the United States as a leader in AI manufacturing while ensuring these systems complement rather than replace existing workers. EDA funding will establish the **AI Manufacturing Pilot Facility** at Georgia Tech, a hub for research, testing, and training in AI systems. Coalition members across the state – such as the Technical College System of Georgia, Spelman College, and the Georgia Minority Business Development Agency – will execute projects to expand awareness, training, and job opportunities to underserved communities and businesses. The GA-AM coalition aims to serve as a national model for how to accelerate the transition to automation in manufacturing while diversifying the next generation of AI leadership.

## **Kansas**

**[The South Kansas Coalition](#), led by Wichita State University (WSU), will receive approximately \$51.4 million to strengthen the United States’ competitive advantage and global market share in aerospace production.**

Over the next two decades, industry forecasts indicate a need to build twice as many aircraft as have been built in the last half century, creating a profound economic moment for the Wichita region. EDA funding will stand up an **Additive Manufacturing Adoption Program** to support the adoption of new production methods by small- and mid-sized manufacturers. The goal is to

shift the manufacturing landscape in the region from a fragmented network of suppliers with outdated processes to a consistent set of qualified factories that can outperform global competitors. Funding will also support the buildout of a workforce training facility and a complementary Smart Manufacturing Adoption Program, which together will de-risk the introduction of new technologies in manufacturing by providing worker training. The South Kansas coalition brings together world-class expertise from academic institutions (e.g., WSU, WSU Tech), leading industry players (e.g., Spirit AeroSystems, GE Aviation), and public sector actors (e.g., State of Kansas).

## Louisiana

**[H<sub>2</sub>theFuture](#), led by the Greater New Orleans Development Foundation, will receive approximately \$50 million to transition the regional hydrogen energy sector by closing the cost gap between green hydrogen, produced from renewable energy sources, and other forms of hydrogen used today, which rely on fossil fuels.**

The need for systemic economic diversification in Louisiana is urgent. In the last decade, the region lost more than 22,000 good-paying jobs in the oil and gas industry, leaving it with legacy energy infrastructure, workforce, and a demand-base primed for transition. By jointly investing in technology, workforce, and commercial-scale end-use within the region's industrial base, New Orleans can drive the nation's energy transition. EDA funding will support **The Nexus Center**, a central campus that connects the entire cluster ecosystem. The campus will coordinate a range of programming that advances regional economic competitiveness in the clean energy space while also centering equity as a core value (e.g., an inclusive entrepreneurship program; an HBCU New Energy Specialization to position students from the region's four Historically Black Colleges and Universities as hydrogen industry leaders in business, public policy, and law; and a workforce training and apprenticeship program). Other projects include investments for testbeds to improve hydrogen cost competitiveness, a development center for hydrogen-fueled ships, and a hydrogen fueling barge located at the Port of South Louisiana that serves as a clean fueling station for existing river vessels.

## Michigan

**[The Global Epicenter of Mobility \(GEM\) coalition](#), led by the Detroit Regional Partnership Foundation, will receive approximately \$52.2 million to transform the Detroit area's legacy automotive industry into a highly competitive advanced mobility cluster.**

Despite significant local assets and potential leverage of more than \$5 billion in private investment, the region's prospects are threatened by rising global competition in the electric and autonomous vehicle market, by the rapid pace of innovation in new mobility solutions and by an aging workforce that needs continuous reskilling to keep up with new products and technologies. EDA funding will address these challenges through a new **Supply Chain Transformation Center**, through which the coalition will provide direct assistance to existing legacy manufacturers to transition to the needs of broader mobility products. A talent

transformation project will work with businesses across the supply chain to identify talent needs and it will invest in wraparound supports and training for workers to fill those gaps. The Mobility Accelerator Innovation Network will help identify and support more fundable start-ups in the mobility space. EDA funding will support foundational infrastructure, increasing accessibility and capacity of testing and proving sites, and preparing industrial sites for private investment. GEM unites 136 coalition members – including the Big Three automakers; United Auto Workers; universities; and state, local, and community leadership – with a vision for a more collaborative and equitable regional economy.

## Missouri, Illinois

**[The St. Louis Tech Triangle](#), led by Greater St. Louis, Inc., will receive approximately \$25 million to converge the region’s three leading industry clusters of biosciences, geospatial, and advanced manufacturing, and build a national model for inclusive economic growth.**

The St. Louis metro area, sitting on the border of Missouri and Illinois, is an older industrial economy where long-term distress and racial disparities were further exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. The coalition’s work will strengthen the global competitiveness of the region’s distinct-but-related industries, while equitably distributing the benefits of this economic growth to communities that have been historically excluded. EDA funding will expand the work of **Rung for Women**, a workforce intermediary that convenes training partners and advanced manufacturing employers to accelerate the number of women (and especially women of color) in industry careers. Other projects will accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship in the region by providing support and business development services to startups (including those owned by historically excluded populations), supplying equipment for workforce training programs, and investing in cutting edge active pharmaceutical ingredient research. The coalition combines historic support and commitment from industry players (e.g., Boeing), labor organizations (e.g., Missouri AFL-CIO), educational institutions, and community-based organizations.

## Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

**[The Mountain | Plains Regional Native CDFI Coalition](#), led by the Four Bands Community Fund Inc., will receive approximately \$45 million to accelerate the growth of the Indigenous finance sector and expand economic opportunity in Native American communities through an alliance of nine Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).**

Serving North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming, the coalition seeks to reverse decades of historical disinvestment and institutionalized inequities for Native communities by creating a locally led financing infrastructure to support Indigenous businesses. EDA will provide seed funding to a **Regional Revolving Loan Fund** intended to strategically deploy financial investments to Native entrepreneurs and small businesses, driving business development and quality job creation. Additional EDA funding will be used to stand up a workforce training program, improve data infrastructure, and make other investments that will expand the

capacity of the Indigenous finance sector. The coalition presents a first-of-its kind, cohesive model for Native communities, who have been historically over-reliant on public sector employment due to a lack of private and philanthropic investment, to develop a robust private sector while also establishing economic sustainability and resilience.

## Nebraska

**[The Heartland Robotics Cluster](#), led by the Invest Nebraska Corporation, will receive approximately \$25 million to accelerate Nebraska’s leadership in the agricultural industry through robotic technologies and advanced manufacturing automation while also revitalizing the region’s rural labor force and strengthening the nation’s food supply chain.**

The Heartland Robotics Cluster serves as a compelling model for engaging rural communities that are often left behind in technology-based economic development. With 1 in every 4 jobs in the state touching the agricultural sector and not enough workers to meet growing demand, the demand for food products is far outpacing Nebraska’s ability to increase production to capture economic benefits. EDA funding will support expansion of the **Nebraska Innovation Studio** in robotics-specific programming and prototyping equipment, creating an environment for innovators from across the state and from a variety of demographics to develop automation and robotic solutions to these issues. The coalition will implement seven other projects, including robotics curriculum development; workforce outreach to provide rural areas with opportunities to work with cutting edge technology; technology commercialization efforts in partnership with private industry; and manufacturing demonstration spaces to de-risk adoption of new technologies.

## New Hampshire

**[The BioFabrication Cluster](#), led by the City of Manchester, will receive approximately \$44 million to establish Southern New Hampshire as the global epicenter for the production and distribution of regenerative tissues and organs.**

Bringing engineered cells, tissues, and ultimately organs to patients will revolutionize healthcare, saving lives and reducing healthcare costs, while ensuring that the region realizes economic benefits. Having made significant progress in recent years, the cluster is at a tipping point where a series of targeted investments will complete the transition to market. EDA funding will be used to develop the **BioFab Foundries for late-stage clinical and commercial manufacturing**, a facility suitable for scaled production of cells, tissues, and organs as life-saving therapies. Currently, no U.S. facility has this outsourcing capacity. The coalition will implement five other projects, including the creation of a BioFabrication accelerator, a cluster work-and-learn program in partnership with community-based organizations, and pilot stations for an electric vertical take-off and landing logistics network to be used for future organ distribution. The BBBRC funding builds on upstream investments from the U.S. Department of Defense, complementing other federal resources by ensuring that benefits from cluster growth are directed to underserved communities in Southern New Hampshire.

## New York

**[New Energy New York](#), a coalition led by the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton, will receive approximately \$63.7 million to accelerate innovation in battery technology and to transform New York's Southern Tier into a global hub of energy storage manufacturing.**

This region, and the legacy manufacturers that once thrived there, have suffered due to deindustrialization over the past several decades; however, momentum is shifting with the launch of New York's first lithium-ion gigafactory in Endicott, NY. EDA funding will leverage the impact of that investment and SUNY Binghamton's research strengths by building a lithium-based battery development manufacturing facility, the **Battery-NY Center**, which will provide testing, certification, and scale-up capacity for new products and companies. Complementary project leads will work with existing manufacturers to establish them as eligible suppliers for energy products; expand workforce training programs to address needs of the growing cluster; and engage community organizations to ensure that the economic benefits are equitable, accessible, and shared across the region. This cluster's success will not only create new jobs and revitalize the region, but will also enable and accelerate the country's clean energy transition.

**[Western New York Advanced Manufacturing](#), led by the Empire State Development Corporation, will receive approximately \$25 million to invest in the distressed eastern side of Buffalo, NY and accelerate the growth of advanced manufacturing in the region.**

Today, the manufacturing industry is threatened by hard-to-fill jobs, a looming retirement cliff, and an inability to attract and employ a diverse workforce. EDA funding will further accelerate the development of the **Northland Corridor** in Buffalo's predominantly Black East Side, by renovating two industrial buildings and creating a clean energy microgrid to power the campus. Funding will also expand a small- and mid-sized manufacturer training program at the Buffalo Manufacturing Works and build out a career readiness program to expand on-ramps into an advanced manufacturing career. This investment leverages New York State's ongoing commitment to bringing prosperity to Buffalo and will help ensure the cluster achieves long-term sustainability.

## North Carolina

**[Accelerate NC – Life Sciences Manufacturing](#), led by the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, will receive approximately \$25 million to strengthen its life sciences manufacturing cluster by investing in a more robust pipeline of biotech talent across the state and expanding those opportunities to underserved and historically excluded communities.**

The biomanufacturing industry in North Carolina is at a critical point: businesses have announced over 7,000 jobs and \$7 billion of investment in the region since 2020; however, existing workforce programs are inadequate to meet demand. While many of these jobs are accessible to those without advanced degrees, some communities are left out of existing

opportunities or training programs. EDA funding will dramatically increase the capacity of the state's education system to prepare current residents for these high-quality, well-paying jobs. The **NC BioBetter project** will expand entry-level biotechnology training programs at 10 community colleges across the state. North Carolina Central University will lead a network of the state's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and one Historically American Indian University in establishing 6 training hubs targeted at these underserved populations. The coalition and its private sector partners will create ambassador and mentorship programs to break down barriers to careers in the industry and set an example for prioritizing equity alongside economic growth.

## Oklahoma

**[The Oklahoma Biotech Innovation Cluster](#), led by the Oklahoma City Economic Development Foundation, will receive approximately \$35 million to rapidly expand its biotechnology cluster, bolstering domestic resiliency within the biopharmaceutical supply chain and making the cluster more globally competitive.**

After 25 years of building the Greater OKC bioscience industry, the region is at a critical inflection point for scalable and equitable growth. Since 2001, local employment in the industry has grown 25 percent, biomedical R&D activity has more than doubled, and anchor economic development institutions have onboarded new leadership specifically prioritizing inclusive and equitable growth. EDA funding will build the **Oklahoma Center for Development Therapeutics**, a program designed to address the cluster's rate-limiting challenge to commercialization (e.g., attracting leading scientists to the region, supporting drug development pipelines). Other funded efforts will include expansion of the region's clinical trials center to include more disease types and patients served (with a specific focus on Tribal communities), an OKBioStart program to launch and grow biotech startups across Central Oklahoma, and a bioprocessing core facility and workforce program preparing the region for biomanufacturing at scale. The coalition capitalizes on a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to build new biotech industry collaborations outside of just the East and West Coasts, bringing economic benefit to the center of the country.

**[The Tulsa Regional Advanced Mobility \(TRAM\) Corridor](#), led by the Indian Nations Council of Governments, will receive approximately \$39 million to transition the region from its legacy of oil and gas and traditional manufacturing to advanced mobility, automation, and unmanned aerial systems.**

Tulsa's existing manufacturing base has been steadily eroding and workforce training programs have struggled to keep pace with technological change. EDA funding will invest in key assets, enabling the region to compete in a rapidly growing industry where no clear winner has yet emerged. Oklahoma State University (OSU) will partner with the Osage Nation to stand up a 114-nautical mile "beyond visual line-of-sight" flight test range for advanced aerial mobility technologies. OSU will also establish the LaunchPad Research and Technology Center in Tulsa's Greenwood neighborhood, the historic site of Black Wall Street, to increase research capacity

for established firms and potential entrepreneurs. Partnerships with community and entrepreneurship support organizations that have deep ties to Greenwood's Black residents such as Black Tech Street, will ensure equitable access to the Center's programs.

## **Oregon, Washington**

**[The Oregon Mass Timber Coalition](#), led by the Port of Portland, will receive approximately \$41.4 million to become a national leader in using mass timber to accelerate affordable housing production, provide good jobs, and restore forest health.**

Oregon faces formidable threats from climate change and economic inequity, and a worsening housing shortage hampers efforts in small, rural towns to retain workers and employers. EDA funding supports a series of targeted investments along the full value chain, starting with working with forest-dependent rural communities to grow access to wood fiber. R&D projects by the University of Oregon and Oregon State University will lead the design and prototyping of new construction materials and products, and public testing facilities will certify that developed products meet fire and acoustic codes, paving the way for production and sale. Infrastructure improvements at the Port of Portland will create a site suitable for private investment in a Mass Timber Campus which will manufacture housing at scale, and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development will ensure planning and development codes are primed to accommodate modular mass timber homes in rural and wildlife-impacted communities. EDA funds will also support a workforce development project that partners with industry, workforce boards, and labor organizations to provide training in industries related to these new wood-based products.

## **Pennsylvania**

**[The Southwestern Pennsylvania \(SWPA\) New Economy Collaborative](#), a coalition of the region's leading university, philanthropic, and private sector players, will receive approximately \$62.7 million to supercharge SWPA's globally recognized robotics and autonomy cluster and ensure that its economic benefits equitably reach rural and coal-impacted communities in the 11-county region.**

This effort represents the first time the region has developed a truly systemic approach to creating opportunity for workers and employers, weaving together five comprehensive, interdependent projects to encourage the adoption, upskilling, and innovation of robotics and autonomous technologies. EDA funding will support **Expanded Pathways to New Economy Careers**, a project to grow the region's existing robotics and AI-related workforce training portfolio to reach beyond the typical urban core and Tier 1 universities, where it is currently concentrated. Simultaneously, EDA funding will be used to stand up an **SME Robotics Adoption** project to support technology adoption by small- and medium-sized enterprises. The five interconnected projects will enable employers from across the region to become more competitive, allow a broad range of workers to become more highly skilled, and restore a

higher quality of life for all communities — all while improving American competitiveness in critical technologies.

## Texas

**[The West Texas Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing Coalition](#), led by the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), will receive approximately \$40 million to strengthen America's aerospace and defense manufacturing capabilities by integrating legacy manufacturers in West Texas into the aerospace and defense (A&D) supply chain.**

While UTEP is a national leader in aerospace training with highly diverse engineering talent, the region loses these skilled workers to more established clusters with greater job opportunities. EDA funding will establish the **El Paso Makes Advanced Manufacturing District** where small- and mid-size firms can co-locate with research and innovation assets while also benefiting from the physical and cybersecurity infrastructure required to participate in the A&D market. Additional funding will expand access to a suite of services for local manufacturers and workers to create reliable on-ramps into A&D supply chains, which have higher pay and less volatility than existing traditional manufacturing sectors. The West Texas Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing coalition has demonstrated the ability to train and educate a diverse STEM workforce in a region that includes a large rural population and is 82 percent Hispanic; this strategy will give those skilled workers the chance to build their careers and their businesses in West Texas.

## Virginia

**[The Advanced Pharmaceutical Manufacturing \(APM\) Cluster](#), a coalition led by the Virginia Biotechnology Research Partnership Authority (Activation Capital), will receive approximately \$52.9 million to expand the domestic supply chain for essential medicines and critical active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).**

The coronavirus pandemic illustrated how vulnerable we can be to disruptions in a supply chain where currently more than 70 percent of API manufacturing facilities are outside the United States. EDA funding builds on a nascent APM corridor from Richmond, VA to Petersburg, VA, investing in two new facilities to expand wet lab space, research and development capacity, and to allow the concentration of commercialization activity. The project will catalyze a new partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University, a research leader in the industry based in Richmond, and Virginia State University, an HBCU in Petersburg, to create new pathways for underserved residents to high-quality training and jobs in the APM. Additional projects will strengthen the community college pipeline for trained technicians, develop the regional supply chain through engagement with local firms, and provide critical infrastructure upgrades to sustain current and future industrial capacity in Petersburg.

## West Virginia

**[The Appalachian Climate Technology coalition \(ACT Now\)](#), led by Coalfield Development Corporation, will receive approximately \$62.8 million to spur job growth in 21 economically distressed and coal-impacted counties in southern West Virginia by creating a hub of clean energy and green economy jobs.**

After decades of decline in the coal economy and its related environmental impacts, the region currently suffers from persistent poverty and disinvestment. With EDA funding, the coalition will address this legacy by supporting the transition from coal to solar power; implementing sustainable reuse projects on abandoned mine sites; rejuvenating brownfield sites with new facilities equipped to train a diversified, skilled workforce and provide advanced manufacturing capacity; and developing entrepreneurial programs to support employment in environmental sustainability. The ACT Now coalition combines deep community engagement, a focus on equity and justice, and strong employer commitments from more than 200 private sector partners, including 4 of the 5 largest solar companies in the region. The coalition's goal is to model multiple strategies for a just transition from the legacy energy industry to a modern, clean regional economy.