November 25, 2024

CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler and Assistant Director John Leutz presented Wyandot County Commissioner Bill Clinger with an Ohio county clock in honor of his retirement. Commissioner Clinger retires after 12 years serving as a Wyandot County Commissioner. He also served as CCAO's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Vice-Chair from 2020 through June 2024 and as committee chair since June.

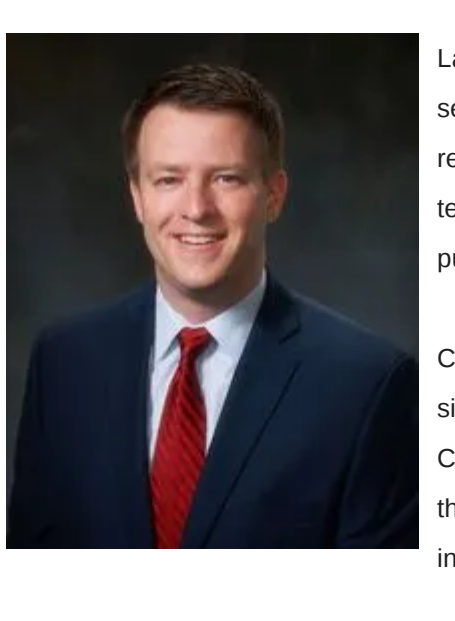
Association and Member News | State and Federal News |
Education and Grants | County News |
Job Postings

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Dates to Remember

ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

Back to Top

Current Stark County Auditor selected to fill open commissioner seat



Last week, the Stark County Republican Central Committee selected Stark County Auditor Alan Harold to fill the remainder of former commissioner Janet Weir Creighton's term. Creighton retired earlier this month after 40 years of public service.

Commissioner Harold has served as Stark County Auditor since 2010. During his tenure, he was president of the County Auditors Association of Ohio in 2019 and received the Richard Makowski Award for outstanding county auditor in 2022.

Before being elected county auditor, Commissioner Harold worked in the banking industry and other private employment. He graduated from Mount Union College and earned an MBA from Ohio State University.

Welcome to CCAO, Commissioner Harold!

CORSA: Tips to Prevent Payment Fraud….

Here are some essential risk management strategies for handling **ACH** (Automated Clearing House) transactions. Implementing these practices significantly reduces the likelihood of fraud, errors, and other issues that may impact ACH transactions' financial stability and trustworthiness.

1. Implement Dual Control and Segregation of Duties

- Require multiple employees to review and authorize ACH transactions. Dual control ensures no single person can initiate, approve, and release an ACH payment independently, reducing internal fraud risks.

2. Authenticate and Authorize Transactions Securely

- Use multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all ACH transactions. Strong authentication methods, such as one-time passwords or biometrics, are particularly effective in verifying the identity of the transaction initiator.
- Regularly review user access to ensure only authorized personnel have ACH permissions.

3. Set Transaction Limits

- Establish daily, weekly, and monthly transaction limits for ACH payments. This caps the amount that can be moved, reducing exposure to large fraudulent or erroneous transactions.

4. Monitor Transactions for Suspicious Activity

- Use automated systems that flag transactions deviating from typical patterns, such as unusually high amounts or unfamiliar accounts. Immediate alerts for flagged transactions allow for a quick response to potential fraud.

5. Verify Account Information Regularly

- Periodically validate bank account numbers and payee details to prevent errors and fraud. This includes verifying any changes to payee bank accounts before processing payments.

6. Establish ACH Return Protocols

- Have procedures in place to manage returns, including monitoring for unauthorized debits or reversals. For example, set up notifications for any returns with Return Reason Codes (e.g., R01 for insufficient funds or R07 for authorization revoked).

7. Require ACH Pre-Authorization

- Obtain written authorization from clients, vendors, or employees before initiating ACH payments. Keep these authorizations securely on file as proof in case of disputes.

8. Conduct Regular Audits and Reconciliation

- Perform frequent audits of ACH transactions to detect and address discrepancies. Timely reconciliation helps identify errors or fraud and ensures that all funds are accurately accounted for.

9. Use ACH Blocks and Filters

- Set up ACH blocks to prevent unauthorized debits and ACH filters to restrict ACH access to specific accounts or transaction types. Blocks and filters add an extra layer of security against unauthorized withdrawals.

10. Stay Updated with NACHA Rules and Regulations

- The ACH network is governed by NACHA, which sets standards for compliance and fraud prevention. Regularly review and update your policies in accordance with the latest NACHA guidelines to avoid penalties and ensure compliance.

11. Educate Employees on ACH Fraud Risks

- Regularly train employees on best practices, fraud schemes, and phishing tactics targeting ACH transactions. Awareness helps employees recognize red flags and maintain vigilance.

Counties receive funding for brownfield remediation, water infrastructure projects

Last week, the DeWine-Husted Administration announced the awarding of $58.2 million for 61 brownfield remediation projects across 33 counties.

The funding was awarded through the Brownfield Remediation Program, currently in its fourth year. It has invested over $560 million in remediating brownfield sites for future development.

Below are descriptions of some of the projects awarded funds:

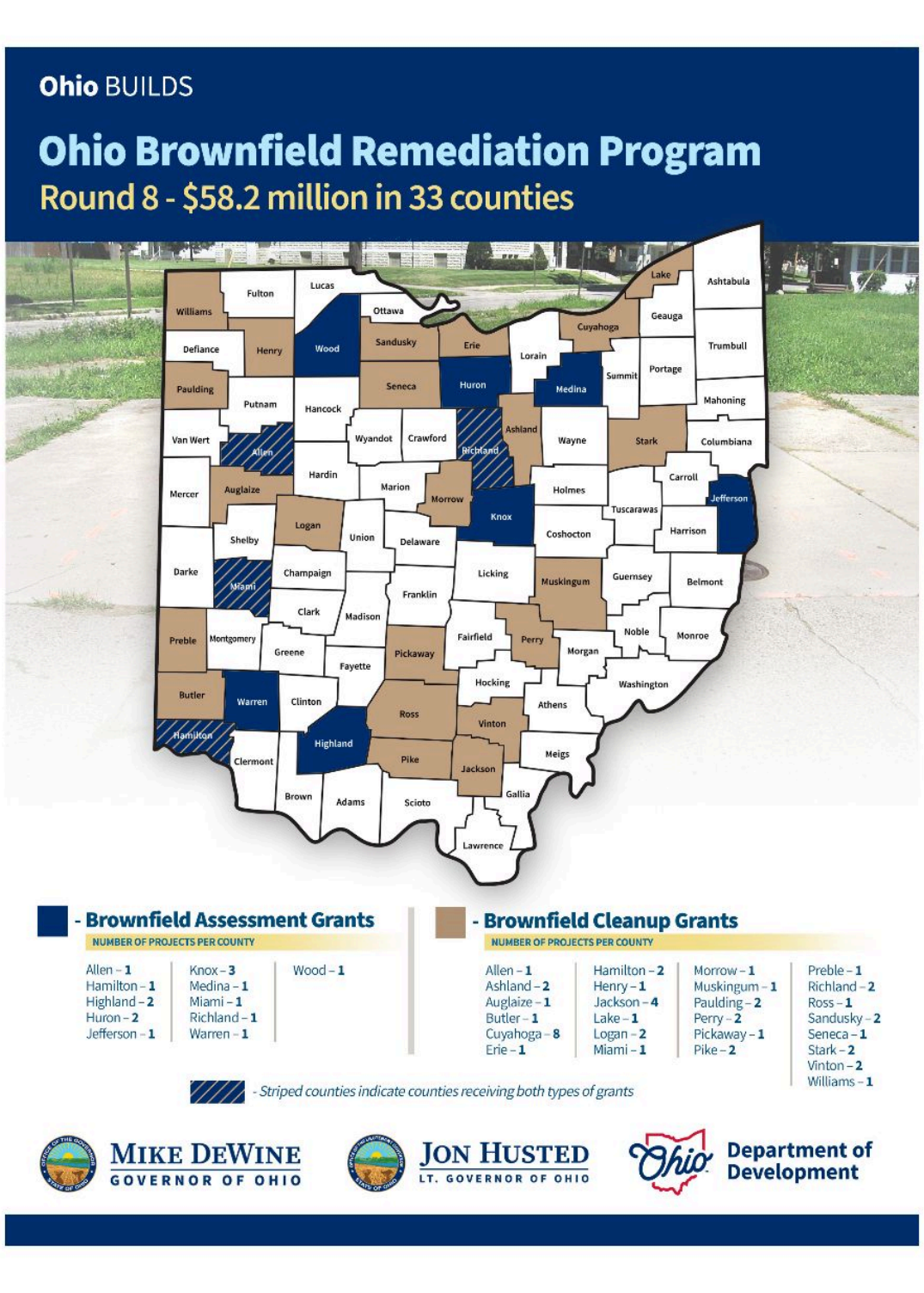
- Vinton County: A cleanup project on a site formerly occupied by a gas station. Underground storage tanks must be removed, and soil and groundwater must be remediated.
- Preble County: A project to demolish an abandoned truck stop and remove corresponding asbestos and contaminated soil and groundwater.
- Pickaway County: A project to remove asbestos from the Pickaway Education Service Center School to improve the safety of the building for students and faculty and to facilitate renovation projects.

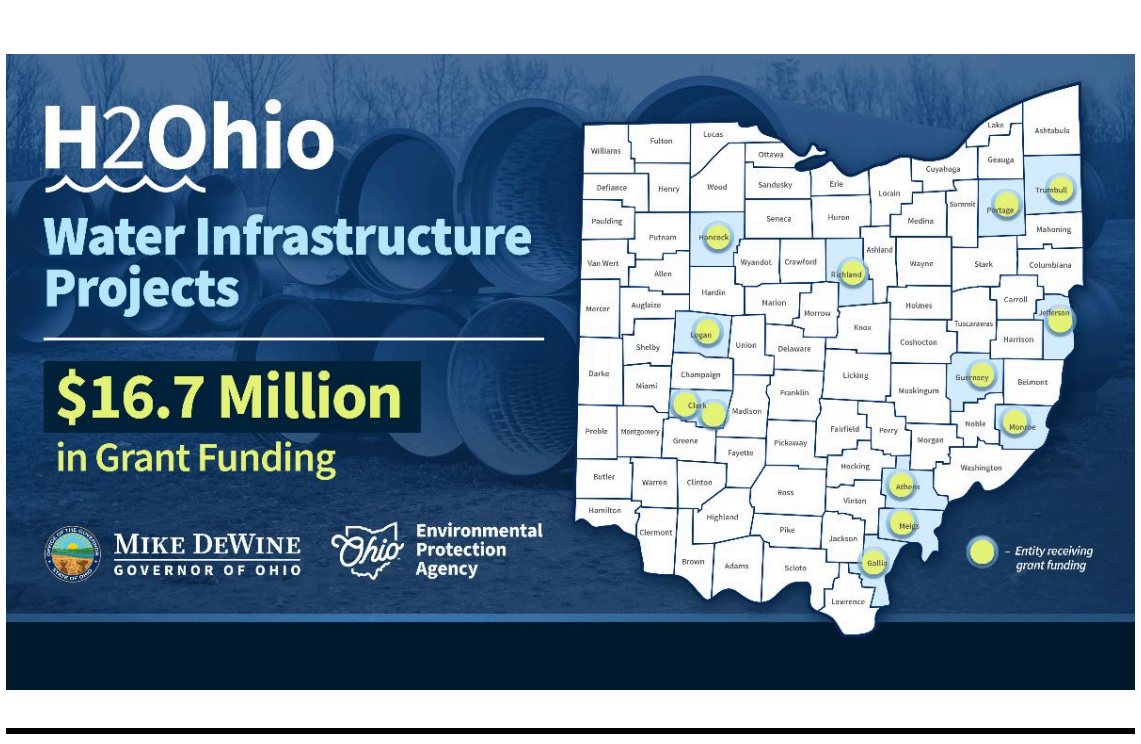
A complete list of projects funded in the latest round of awards can be found here.

Water Infrastructure
Also, last week, Governor DeWine and Ohio EPA Director Anne Vogel announced that 13 projects received a total of $16.7 million for water infrastructure projects.

Of the 13 awards, five are for projects conducted by counties. These include a project to mitigate the impacts of the Meigs County Landfill on surrounding surface water, a project in Trumbull County to construct 10,000 feet of sewer and a water treatment plan, and a project in Clark County to construct a new water distribution system for the Village of Donnelsville.

A complete list of projects can be found here.




H2Ohio
Water Infrastructure Projects
$16.7 Million
in Grant Funding
MIKE DEWINE GOVERNOR OF OHIO
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Entity receiving grant funding

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

Anthem

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

Competency Restoration Work Group issues recommendations

The Governor's Work Group on Competency Restoration and Diversion, created earlier this year to address the lack of available beds in the state's six state-operated psychiatric hospitals, recently released its recommendations report. Jackson County Commissioner and CCAO Board of Directors Member Donnie Willis was CCAO's representative on the group.

The report details 15 recommendations across six subject areas. Below are a few recommendations that may be of particular interest to counties.

- **Recommendation 3**: Continue to build the state's continuum of housing supports for individuals with mental illness and criminal justice involvement.
- **Recommendation 7**: Create local processes to assess behavioral health needs and risk concerns early in the criminal justice process.
- **Recommendation 10**: Expand Assisted Outpatient Treatment to more counties as an alternative pathway to competency restoration.
- **Recommendation 13**: Expand jail-based competency restoration pilots in higher-volume jails with access to needed behavioral health resources.
- **Recommendation 14**: Expand access to jail-based behavioral healthcare, including increased access to mediations, uniform formularies, and the availability of prescribers and providers to administer medications.

You can access the full report here.

OPWC issues biennial report for 2023-2024

As the legislature moves to put a renewal issue on the May primary ballot, the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) recently issued its biennial report for 2023 and 2024.

The report provides an overview of how OPWC distributed the $694 million it awarded in the biennium. County governments received the second largest share of funding over the biennium, 28% ($195.3 million). Cities received the largest share, 43% ($297.5 million). Counties were followed by villages (19%, $134.5 million), townships (9%, $62.6 million), and water and sewer districts (<1%, $4.1 million),

The report also includes the distribution of funds for projects of different intrastate types. It goes into more detail on the different infrastructure types and gives examples of projects funded under each category. The funding breakdown by infrastructure type is below.

- Roads: $429.5 million (62%)
- Water Supply: $105.0 million (15%)
- Wastewater: $74.9 million (11%)
- Bridge/Culvert: $61.3 million (9%)
- Stormwater: $23.3 million (3%)

The report includes a table on page 13 showing the infrastructure funding distributed for projects within each county (the figures represent all funding for projects in the county, not just those undertaken by the county government itself).

The report concludes by discussing an additional $76.7 million it distributed over the biennium for the Clean Ohio Program, which is intended for environmental conservation projects.

You can view the full report here.

Disclosure: CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler is a voting member on the OPWC.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

Back to Top

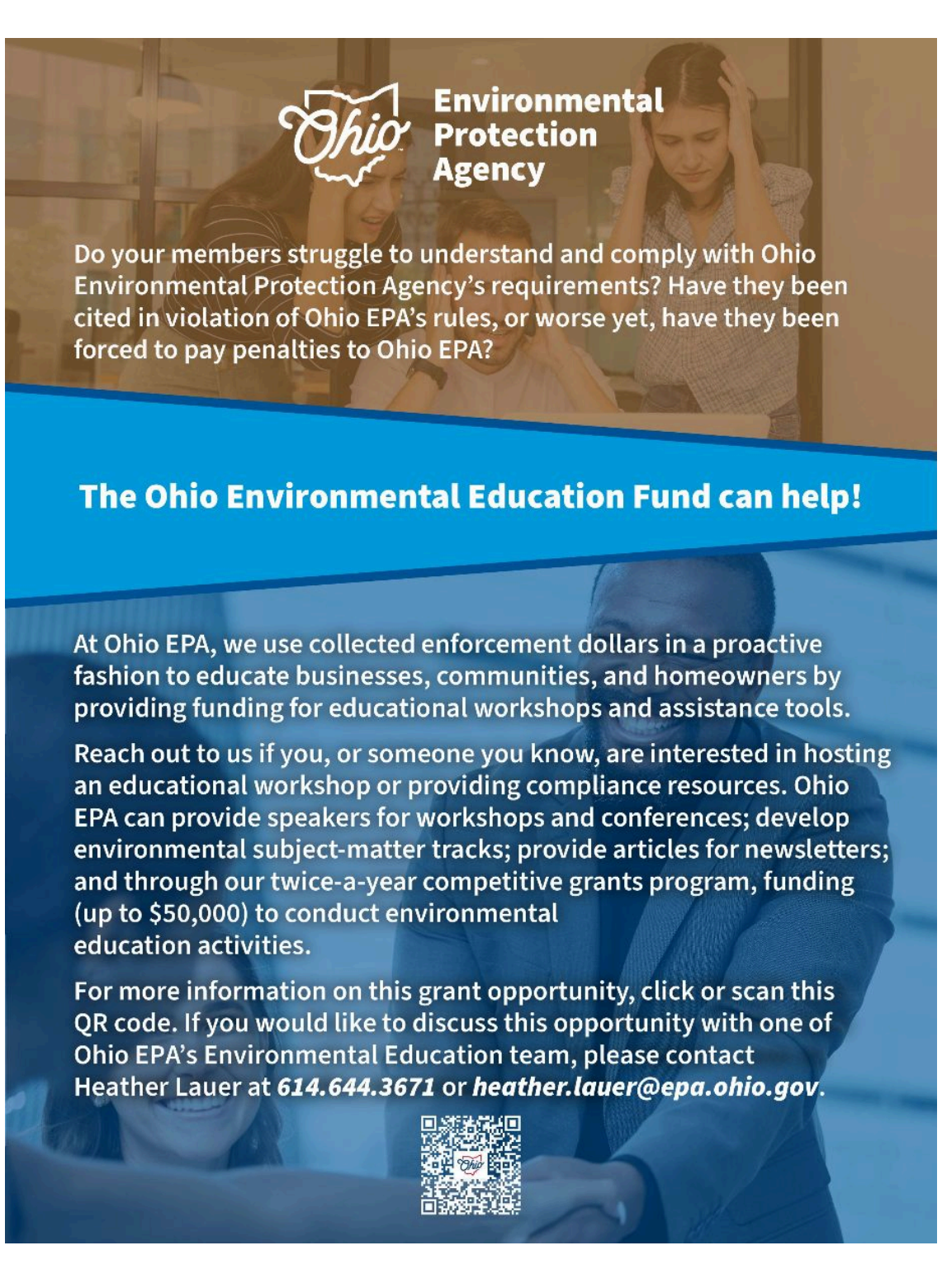
Visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities page on the CCAO website for a detailed listing of open grant programs.

OEPA's Office of Environmental Education offers information on environmental obligations

The Office of Environmental Education (OEE) within the Ohio EPA can be a useful resource to counties to help educate local entities about their obligations under environmental laws and regulations to and provide best practices.

The OEE Fund annually awards grants to support environmental education efforts across the state. An example of a recent local government award was granted to the Clermont Soil & Water Conservation District to provide training on encouraging nutrient runoff load reduction best practices.

You can learn more about the OEE and its funding opportunities on the office's website.



Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

Do your members struggle to understand and comply with Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's requirements? Have they been cited in violation of Ohio EPA's rules, or worse yet, have they been forced to pay penalties to Ohio EPA?

The Ohio Environmental Education Fund can help!

At Ohio EPA, we use collected enforcement dollars in a proactive fashion to educate businesses, communities, and homeowners by providing funding for educational workshops and assistance tools.

Reach out to us if you, or someone you know, are interested in hosting an educational workshop or providing compliance resources. Ohio EPA can provide speakers for workshops and conferences; develop environmental subject-matter tracks; provide articles for newsletters; and through our twice-a-year competitive grants program, funding (up to $50,000) to conduct environmental education activities.

For more information on this grant opportunity, click or scan this QR code. If you would like to discuss this opportunity with one of Ohio EPA's Environmental Education team, please contact Heather Lauer at ***614.644.3671*** or ***heather.lauer@epa.ohio.gov***.

Application window for FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant open until December 20

The 2024 round of FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program is open for applications until December 20. The federal grant program enhances firefighters' safety by providing direct assistance for critical training and equipment.

FEMA expects to award about $291.6 million awards under the 2024 program. The match rate for grants depends on the size of the applicant's jurisdiction:

- Applicants serving 20,000 residents or fewer must provide at least a 5% match;
- Applicants serving between 20,000 and 1 million residents must provide at least a 10% match;
- Applicants serving a jurisdiction of more than 1 million residents must provide at least a 15% match.

Among the eligible applicants are fire departments or agencies with a formal arrangement with a territory authority (such as a state, county, municipality, fire district, or township), including volunteer fire departments.

Applicants may request funds for operations and safety, vehicle acquisition, or regional projects.

FEMA's website provides more information about the grant program, including how to apply and more specifics about eligible requests.

OMHAS opens grant opportunity for Expansion of Employment Services

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) has issued a request for Expressions of Interest for organizations to establish and support programs for the employment of adults with serious mental illness and/or youth with serious emotional disturbances.

To be eligible for the opportunity, organizations must meet some minimal requirements. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Must be a non-profit 501(c)(3) and have certification in Employment Services through OMHAS.
- Must participate in employment training, conferences, and other educational opportunities as OMHAS recommends.
- Must involve and include individuals with lived experience in developing and maintaining the employment programs.

The total funding available is $1 million and is intended for organizations that are already implementing and supporting employment programs. Funds awarded through the program must be used by June 30, 2025.

PLEASE NOTE: Counties are not eligible for this grant, but OMHAS and CCAO request that our members spread information about this funding opportunity to organizations in your communities.

Recordings of 2024 Ohio Grants Summit available online

Last week, the Office of Budget and Management held the 2024 Ohio Grants Summit, the latest iteration of the annual event that connects local governments with the partners and expertise needed to successfully compete for grants at the state and federal levels. Recordings of the two-day event are available on the Ohio Channel and are linked below.

Day One:

- Grant Writing 101: Tips for a Successful Grant Application
- Ohio's Unified Approach to Federal Funding
- People, Policies, and Systems: The Foundation for Establishing Sustainable Grants Capacity

Day Two:

- Obligating and Closing Out ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds
- Uniform Guidance Update
- Water/Wastewater Roundtable

COUNTY NEWS

Back to Top

Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One story from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted, and on occasion other stories may be highlighted as well.

Northwest District

Health dept. wins $1M grant
Sandusky Register, November 15, 2024
Federal officials awarded the Erie County Health Department with a $1 million grant to provide health care to jail inmates and suspects who are criminal defendants.

"The funding will support innovative approaches to health care delivery for individuals navigating the justice system, focusing on addressing disparities, fostering rehabilitation and promoting public safety," according to a press release from U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Toledo, who announced the grant award on Wednesday.

Pete Schade, Erie County's health commissioner, said that while the health department has been providing nursing services for years to inmates in the Erie County jail, the grant means that efforts will be expanded to provide health care, mental health care, dental care and needed prescription drugs to people involved in the criminal justice system.

"'Our plan is to provide outreach and education to them directly," Schade said. "We are working on a program to get them their medication, pharmaceutical things they need to behave themselves and keep them out of trouble, keep the recidivism rate as low as possible. Not everybody who goes to jail is a 'bad person'

"We want to make sure they have an opportunity to become healthy," Schade added.

The two-year grant is from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Quality Improvement Fund — Justice Involved program. It starts on Dec. 1 and will run through the end of November 2026.

Northeast District

Council of governments closer to emergency communications switch
The Vindicator, November 22, 2024
County and local officials have a better idea of what it will cost to switch emergency communications to a statewide system after a meeting this week.

Emergency responders from Austintown, Boardman and the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office, who comprise the ABM Council of Governments, met Tuesday with representatives of Motorola.

Mahoning County has a software upgrade agreement with Motorola to maintain the existing network, hardware and software that keep emergency communications systems operating for police, fire and road crews.

The communities are mulling a move from their independent first-response communication system to the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System, commonly known as MARCS.

"We're fact finding now, looking at the cost effectiveness of switching to that system," said sheriff's office Chief Deputy William Cappabianca. "We got a lot of questions answered and now we also know other questions to ask to determine if it is a wise move."

Central District

Licking County agencies launch program to reduce drug use, overdoses
Newark Advocate, November 24, 2024
The Licking County Health Department and Board of Commissioners announced Monday partnering on a program that seeks reducing drug use and fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the area.

The partnership establishes the Community Navigator Program, which the agencies say will provide a one-stop shop for people seeking education on treatment options, resources and individualized support, among other services.

"Establishing this type of program has been a priority for our department, and it is contained in our strategic plan and the county's Community Health Improvement Plan," Licking County Health Commissioner Chad Brown said in a news release. "We are very thankful for our partnership with the county commissioners to make this program a reality, and we will work hard to serve as many county residents as possible and to assist them with leading healthier lives."

In the release, the commissioners stated they "fully endorse" the program's creation. They allocated national opioid settlement funding towards the program, calling that decision an appropriate use of them to provide support and treatment for Licking County residents struggling with addiction.

The program comes a few months after the health department issued its latest drug overdose advisory following 10 nonfatal overdoses over two days.

Southwest District

Hamilton County approves property tax rebate for next year
WCPO, November 21, 2024
Homeowners in Hamilton County will receive a property tax rebate in 2025.

Hamilton County commissioners on Thursday voted to take 30% of the one-half percent sales tax proceeds from the stadium deal, or $31.4 million, and apply it to property tax reductions for the 2024 tax year payable in 2025. The vote was 2-1, with Alicia Reece and Stephanie Summerow Dumas voting "yes" and Denise Driehaus voting "no."

Chief Deputy Auditor Amy Humphrey said they estimate homeowners will save $106.97 per $100,000 of assessed property value. Humphrey added they won't know the exact amount until the end of the year.

"Homeowners are facing mounting challenges, including high property taxes, increased utility bills, and rising food costs," Hamilton County Commissioner Alicia Reece said in a press release about the vote. "Many, especially our senior citizens, are struggling to make ends meet. If we can honor our commitments to the sports teams, we must honor our commitments to the taxpayers."

Southeast District

County enters oil & gas lease
The Times Leader, November 21, 2024
A busy Belmont County Commission agenda Wednesday included entering an oil and gas lease with an Oklahoma-based company.

Commissioners voted to enter the lease with Ascent Resources-Utica, LLC, effective Wednesday for the amount of $6,500 per net leasehold acre for a piece of land measuring 26.976 acres in Pultney and Mead Township.

The lease has a five-year term with 20% royalties with a total payment amount of $175,346.

The commission also approved and signed the State of Ohio Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant Agreement with Ohio's Department of Public Safety, Ohio Emergency Management Agency on behalf of the Belmont County Emergency Management Agency which became effective on Sept. 25 and will end on Jan. 15, 2026, for $60,000.

"The grant is a 75/25 split, the county's 25% can be an in-kind match," Commissioner Jerry Echemann said. "The grant will be used to update the Belmont County Hazard Mitigation Plan which needs to be done every five years."

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please view the CCAO Calendar for a comprehensive list of events to note.

Back to Top

NOVEMBER 28
Thanksgiving

DECEMBER 4 - 6
CCAO / CEAO Winter Conference

DECEMBER 25
Christmas

DECEMBER 31
New Year's Eve

JANUARY 1
New Year's Day

Copyright © 2024 CCAO, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.