

ANNUAL REPORT









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Our Team

Action Team

Nicholas Chretien

Executive Director

Daniel Bancroft

Operations Manager

Marcelle Wilson Development Manager

Nicole Marino CPR Program Manager

Kennedy Kish Marketing Manager **Danielle Griffith**

GIS Analyst

Ben Kerr

Graphic Designer

Gianna Marinucci

CITY Site Coordinator

Current Internships

Giovanni Lisi

Graphic Design Intern

Nikechi Onunwor

Business Assistance Intern

Grace Persing

CITY Program Support Intern

Sarah Streb

Technical Media Intern

2024 Completed Internships

Colleen Davis

Community Development Fellow

Yanvitha Gottipati

Computer Science Intern

Rose McClurkin

Community Engagement Intern

Jayanta Pandit

CITY Program Support Intern

Board of Directors

Paul Homick, Jr.

President

President, Mercy Health Foundation Mahoning Valley

Jerome Franklin Secretary

Master Barber and Founder, Starting Lineup Barbershop *Term ended in 2024

Debora Flora

Vice President

Executive Director, Mahoning County Land Bank

Anthony Trevena

Board Member

Executive Director, Western Reserve Port Authority

Teresa Miller

Board Member

Executive Director, Valley Partners

James Sutman

Treasurer

Founder and Owner, Iron String Life Enhancement, Inc. and Purple Cat

Tyler Williams

Board Member

Managing Partner, Twin Realty & Leasing; Chief Business Development Officer, HESS Advanced Solutions

Strategic Pillars

VISION

EAG sees a vibrant, fair, and prosperous Mahoning Valley where the partnerships and networks we support transform our communities into vibrant places where people want to live.

MISSION

EAG partners with local governments, academic institutions, businesses, community development organizations, policymakers, and the communities we serve to build strong, connected, well-conceived solutions that spark lasting change.

VALUES

Equity planning is at our core. Providing high-quality professional development to interns is effective in building the region's future. Strengthening networks is a tool to foster a culture of innovation and enterprise.

Strategic Plan 2024

1

Financial Sustainability

Preserve fiscal stability through continued cultivation of diverse funding sources

2

Responsive Programs

Strategically revitalize urban cores and commercial corridors of the Mahoning Valley 3

Renewed Community Building

Use the key asset of deep, broad, and inclusive relationships to continue to provide useful community connections

4

Visibility of EAG

Promote EAG and its unique regional position

5

EAG as a Strong Organization

Build from within for a lasting future

EAG's strategic plan was funded through the READY Nonprofit Grant program awarded by the Appalachian Regional Commission, following the successful completion of the READY Nonprofit Initiative.

Message from Leadership

Dear Stakeholder,

The Economic Action Group experienced a transformative year in 2024, marked by substantial progress in strategic planning and the development of the EAG team.

In March, the EAG Board of Directors officially adopted a new three-year strategic plan. This forward-thinking roadmap establishes a clear vision for the organization's future, centered around five key pillars: Financial Sustainability, Responsive Programs, Community Building, Marketing and Visibility, and Organizational Stability.

In a challenging year for downtown Youngstown, we took a leading role in supporting recovery efforts and revitalization programming. In the aftermath of the tragic explosion at the Realty Tower, EAG worked closely with partners to assist impacted businesses and organize the downtown "Open" event. Displaying strong leadership in crisis recovery, EAG spearheaded a proposal led by Lake to River in collaboration with regional partners.

These collective efforts secured a \$50,000 Vibrant Communities Pre-Project Planning Grant from JobsOhio, the largest of its kind since the program's inception in 2019. We look forward to collaborating with local and regional planning partners to develop a strategy that addresses both immediate and long-term needs, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for downtown Youngstown.

Our work in Youngstown this year showcased close collaboration with the City on several key initiatives, alongside the continued success of our Commercial Property Revitalization (CPR) program, which received a feature in the National Association of Realtors' quarterly publication, Create. Highlights included launching the city's first Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA), conducting a comprehensive citywide lighting inventory to improve neighborhood visibility, and expanding the success of the YO! App.

We want to express our deep appreciation to our hardworking team, dedicated partners, generous funders, and steadfast supporters who make our work possible. Building on this strong foundation, in 2025 we will continue to expand our services throughout the Mahoning Valley.

Sincerely,

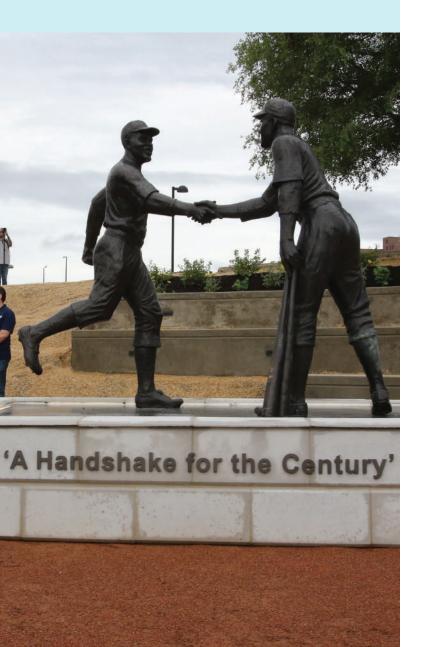
Nicholas Chretien Executive Director



Programming Overview

STRATEGY

EAG's programming strategy addresses challenges with a stakeholder-informed, strengths-based approach, fueling the Mahoning Valley's economic vitality. Rooted in our vision, mission, and values, our initiatives are designed to drive sustainable change. Through community outreach, stakeholder interviews, market assessments, and critical reflection on outcomes, we chart a clear and effective path forward.



Anchor Partnerships

Anchor partnerships utilize the power of their economic assets to address social and economic disparities, revitalizing local communities. They are uniquely positioned to stabilize local economies and reverse community disinvestment.

Commercial Property Revitalization (CPR)

Commercial Property Revitalization involves the redevelopment of vacant buildings along Youngstown's key corridors to create space for local businesses to flourish, benefiting the community and economy in the process.

- Commercial property improvement
- Entrepreneur assistance
- Resource knowledge
- Local business growth/expansion
- Community and economy strengthening
- Urban beautification

Community Engaged Learning (CEL)

Community Engaged Learning is utilized at EAG through internships that allow college students to gain hands-on experience in their fields of study while solving community issues.

- Real-world experience
- Professional development
- Civic outreach and engagement
- Community networking

Anchor Partnerships

City of Youngstown

YO! App

Powered by Colu and sponsored by the City of Youngstown, the YO! App rewards residents and visitors for shopping at Youngstown's local businesses using their credit or debit card in the form of City Bites. Each City Bite is equivalent to \$1 and can be redeemed at any of the 24 local businesses registered as redeemers. EAG supports the YO! App through business engagement, social media management, and growing the app with local partnerships. This year, members of the EAG team promoted the YO! App at YSU's IGNITE event, leading to 2024's highest spike in linked cards. As of December 30, 2024, 143 Youngstown businesses are partnered with the YO! App and \$90,229 has been given to local businesses for redemptions. The YO! App has generated \$982,608 in economic activity to date, \$583,954 of which coming from 2024 alone.

Zoning & Policy

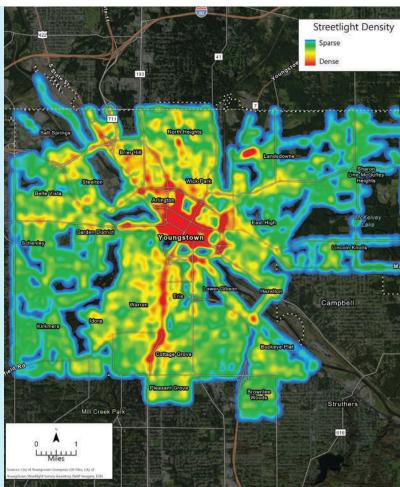
EAG undertook several impactful projects related to zoning and policy in Youngstown. The EAG team worked alongside the City of Youngstown Council Zoning Committee, participating in months of working sessions focused on crafting long-term local solutions, such as improved business licensing processes and more consistent design review standards. Program interns conducted comparative analyses on best zoning practices among peer cities most similar to Youngstown's geography, demographics, and culture.

Among our notable achievements was the successful implementation of several moratoriums on business sectors that hinder development along the city's main corridors, including used car lots, discount retail chains, and auto repair shops. These moratoriums will remain in place until summer 2025, which provides enough time to implement a long-term business licensing process.

Streetlight Survey

EAG led four student interns in the major undertaking of surveying every streetlight in the city of Youngstown. Over the course of eight months, the team collected information on each light's operational status, bulb type, ownership, and GPS location. The survey identified 9,542 streetlights, 1,077 of which were malfunctioning or non-operational. The city will use this data for resource allocation purposes and will create a centralized database of streetlights to improve maintenance efforts.





Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area

As part of a larger plan to rejuvenate downtown, EAG collaborated with the City on the planning and implementation of Youngstown's first DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area). With over 160 locations across Ohio alone, DORAs allow patrons 21 and older to enjoy alcoholic beverages while strolling outdoors within specified boundaries. The DORA successfully launched December 6th after months of planning, bringing thousands of dollars to downtown businesses.



Downtown Youngstown Strategic Plan

EAG is proud to work with the City of Youngstown and the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber on conducting both phases of the Downtown Youngstown Strategic Plan. This comprehensive initiative aims to transform downtown into a vibrant and resilient hub, driven by valuable input from community stakeholders.

The first phase, which began in October, focuses on engaging downtown businesses and stakeholders through interviews to identify the district's needs. Immediate action will be taken on smaller projects, with Phase 1 anticipated to conclude in early 2025.

The second phase focuses on tackling larger challenges to drive sustainable, long-term progress downtown. This phase emphasizes strategic investments and leveraging existing assets to build a stronger foundation for growth. Phase 2 is projected to be complete within 3 to 5 years.

This plan is funded through the JobsOhio Pre-Project Planning Grant, the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber Foundation, The Youngstown Foundation, and the City of Youngstown.

Mahoning Valley Resource Compass

EAG collaborated with the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners, the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, the City of Youngstown, and Economic Impact Catalyst (EIC) to develop the Mahoning Valley Resource Compass in September 2023. (www.mahoning.biz)

The website integrates all the tools, knowledge, and support entrepreneurs need to start, launch, and grow a business into one platform, making the Mahoning Valley a more attractive location for business owners. EAG and EIC have continued to meet each month to exchange ideas on how to improve and market the site, which include partnerships with local libraries and the distribution of promotional handouts at entrepreneurship events.

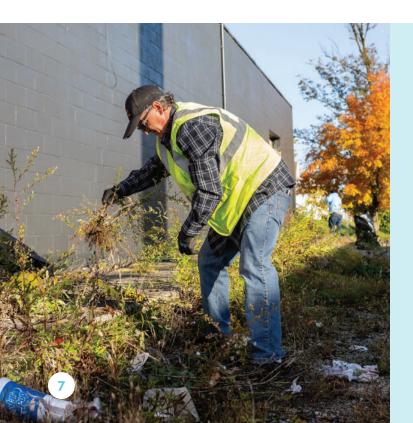
Commercial Property Revitalization

EAG's Commercial Property Revitalization (CPR) program works to reshape commercial corridors and blighted neighborhoods in the Mahoning Valley to create people focused, livable spaces where residents can reconnect with the community through walking, shopping, and engaging locally. Our work has leveraged over \$900,000 of investment into CPR properties. Since beginning the CPR program, we have identified nearly \$11 million of pending and completed investment along the Mahoning Avenue corridor. We expanded the program this year to include the mowing and maintenance of additional lots from the Mahoning Valley Land Bank.

One major success of the CPR program is Trek Coffee House and Voyager Beverages on Youngstown's West Side, which hosted its Grand Opening in January. Originally located in Canfield, Ohio, Levi Smith, the owner of Voyager Beverages, relocated his business into the heart of Youngstown with the help of EAG, bringing new jobs to the community. Trek and the green space on its property now serve as venues for many community events and markets. A strong business that serves as a lively and inclusive gathering spot is a perfect example of what the program seeks to create.







CPR Maintenance Team

The CPR Maintenance Team was launched by EAG and Flying High in September 2023 with the initial priority to clean up the core CPR project area and prepare for the Mahoning Avenue Fall Fest. After proving effective, the team entered 2024 as a full-scale corridor maintenance unit focusing on Mahoning Avenue and other commercial property priorities in Youngstown.

This initiative provided job training and career opportunities to Flying High clients and saw the clearing of 6.5 miles of sidewalks and improvement of nearly 20 acres of commercial property in Youngstown. EAG has invested in equipment such as a truck, trailer, and landscaping equipment to support current and future expansion efforts.

Properties

3143 Mahoning Avenue

In 2023, The Western Reserve Port Authority purchased the former Clark Bar and Billiards building in partnership with EAG to repurpose it for commercial use. The project began with a renovated facade, modernizing the building's aesthetic and giving a facelift to the entire block. By the summer of 2024, two newly renovated apartments on the second floor welcomed residents committed to the community's growth. The ground floor was fully remodeled to create a versatile space suitable for many types of commercial uses.

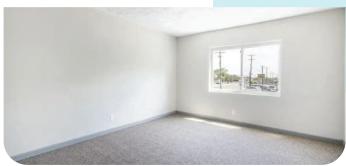
The property is currently being promoted to find the right business tenants, and is listed through Platz Realty Group. EAG managed numerous parts of the transformation process, including utility transfers, guiding prospective business tenants through the building, and working with our CPR Maintenance Team to clean the overgrown property line. Our property management services have been integral in supporting the WRPA's development of this property and ensuring that work is done with the community in mind.











1528 Mahoning Avenue

EAG, in collaboration with the Western Reserve Port Authority, has continuously enhanced the former Sweet Arrangements building, playing a key role in the revitalization of the corridor. The property, once home to a florist that served the community for over 40 years before closing in 2022, is now ready to begin a new chapter. Our goal is to find the appropriate owner for this vacant building while improving economic mobility for residents and driving investment along the Mahoning Avenue corridor. This unique property includes a workspace, showroom, garage, and a second-floor living space, and is listed through Platz Realty Group. EAG has provided more than two dozen property tours of the space, with each bringing us closer to selecting the next occupant.

Commercial Property Revitalization

Mahoning Avenue Fall Fest

In September, EAG partnered with Councilman Mike Ray of Youngstown's 4th Ward to organize the 8th annual Mahoning Avenue Fall Fest. This event again highlighted dozens of local businesses and vendors while showcasing development efforts along the corridor. This year's Fall Fest attracted over 50 participating local vendors and hundreds of attendees, bringing Mahoning Avenue to life with increased foot traffic and community engagement.

Feedback from vendors and participating businesses reflected the event's success, with many expressing support for similar initiatives in the future. Local residents echoed this enthusiasm, highlighting the positive impact of redevelopment efforts and the festival's role in fostering a sense of community pride.









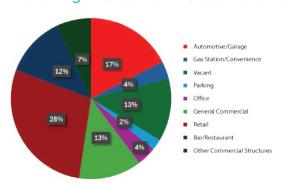


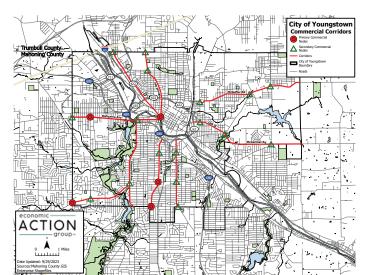
GIS Mapping

Maps are a key tool we use to tell the stories of our properties, document our progress, and identify future projects. This year, EAG updated the Mahoning Commons Public Art Opportunity Site Pitch Deck to showcase the best locations within the neighborhood for the placement of public art to enhance community revitalization efforts.

Mapping was also used to conduct the Mahoning Avenue Commercial Corridor Property Assessment Survey that leveraged the City of Youngstown's Property Maintenance Code Inspection Checklist to evaluate properties based on GPS location, property type, land use, occupancy status, structural integrity, and the condition of each property's exterior components. This survey provides a comprehensive assessment of the properties along the corridor and will serve as a valuable tool in guiding ongoing rejuvenation efforts on Mahoning Avenue.

Mahoning Avenue Commercial Land Use







Commercial Property Revitalization

Public Art Initiatives

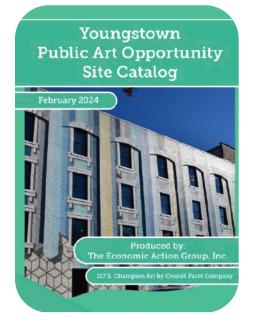
EAG values public art as an important aesthetic that enhances an area's quality of life and unique sense of place. In 2024, EAG commissioned two public art projects along the Mahoning Avenue corridor to complement ongoing revitalization efforts.

A mural honoring Frank Sinkwich, a Heisman Trophywinning football player from the West Side, was designed and painted by the Youngstown-based Overall Paint Company over the fall. Sinkwich was a well-decorated athlete, and this mural tells the story of his athletic career through a peek at how his trophy case might have looked.

The second commission was the painting of a planter on a Mahoning County Land Bank lot about a block away from the Sinkwich mural. This floral mural was designed and executed by local artists and YSU students Lindsay DeLullo and Emma Strope-Downs to activate this vacant lot. Though mostly complete, final touches will be added to the planter in early 2025.







Public Art Opportunity Site Catalog

To encourage more art in Youngstown, we created the Public Art Opportunity Site Catalog in 2015. Our team documented all potential "canvases" for public art downtown, noting each site's construction material and rating its condition to determine prime locations for murals and other art installations.

The EAG team updated and expanded this catalog in 2024 to include over 220 sites across each of Youngstown's nine main corridors, using the same survey methods as the initial version. Our goal is for the public to use this document to collaborate with local business owners on the installation of more public art within the city.

Community Engaged Learning

What is Community **Engaged Learning?**

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) is a broad term used to describe immersive educational experiences within communities. EAG utilizes CEL through a number of internships that provide students the opportunity to gain experience in their field of study while making an impact in the Mahoning Valley. Since 2020, EAG has proudly welcomed 40 interns across a variety of roles.

Our internship offerings have expanded over the years, with 2024 including roles like community engagement, mapping, computer science, business assistance, marketing, and human resources. We are intentional about creating valuable experiences for our interns, using tools like regular check-ins and reflection surveys to improve programming, implementing a professional development stipend, and tailoring the experience to each individual intern's professional goals.

EAG pursues external support to enhance internship experiences. In 2024, EAG benefited from the Ohio Department of Development College Tech Internship program. This unique opportunity pairs Ohio employers with computer science students from local universities and helped us expand our capacity in tech-oriented projects, especially in our GIS work.

EAG Internship Highlights:

- Community feedback meetings
- Survey distribution and data processing
- Funding proposal collection, processing, & review
- Facilitation of proposal review committees
- General support for community work, including:
 - GIS mapping
 - Graphic design
 - Research
 - Professional writing
 - Computer science
 - Resident engagement



Community Engaged Learning

The CITY Program

A prominent facet of Community Engaged Learning at EAG is the Civic Innovation Transforming Youngstown (CITY) internship program, an 8-week collaboration between Youngstown State University and EAG each summer. Guided by local high school teachers serving as Site Coordinators, interns work with their team members to identify creative solutions for various community challenges.

The CITY program is rooted in the Community-Engaged Educational Ecosystem Model (C-EEEM). This program, piloted by the University of Notre Dame and their Center for Civic Innovation, has since partnered with YSU and the University of Louisville to replicate the program and grow communities. The National Science Foundation funds the CITY program through a four-year grant.





This year's program saw the highest level of participation yet, with 13 YSU students partaking. The interns were divided into four groups, each guided by mentors from across the city. Together, they developed innovative solutions to address pressing local challenges. Each project's results highlighted the impact civic innovation can have on the overall well-being of the community.

2024 CITY Program Projects:

- Crab Creek Corridor Restoration
- Crab Creek Water Quality Risk Assessment
- Walkability in the Youngstown Area
- Voter Turnout & Civic Engagement in Youngstown

Final Project Goals and Solutions

Crab Creek Corridor Restoration

Mentor: Stephanie Gilchrist - City of Youngstown

Goal: Revitalize the Crab Creek Corridor through environmental cleanup and economic development

Solution: Stimulate interest in the area by creating and maintaining green spaces along the Creek, making it an attractive location to open a business

Crab Creek Water Quality Risk Assessment

Mentor: Jordan Karim - Youngstown Water Department

Goal: Identify the pollutants of the stormwater that flows into Crab Creek and propose ways to limit future contamination

Solution: Water testing identified potential sources of water pollution to Crab Creek. Further testing is recommended, as well as remediation strategies like planting native trees

Walkability in the Youngstown Area

Mentor: Robin Perry - Healthy Community Partnership

Goal: Assess the walkability of selected routes using physiological markers such as heart rate to evaluate how walkability affects physical and mental health

Solution: More extensive studies that better take into account different demographic factors are recommended

Voter Turnout & Civic Engagement in Youngstown

Mentor: Sarah Lowry - Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley

Goal: Increase voter participation in Youngstown's younger demographics

Solution: Hold mock elections for local high school students to ease anxiety around unpreparedness at the polls and partner with YSU to disseminate college voter information and provide shuttle services to polling locations on election days



Capacity Building

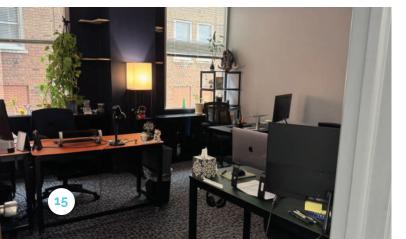
Marketing

To increase EAG's visibility as outlined in our strategic plan, we hired our first Marketing Manager in June. This addition has allowed us to expand our existing photography, videography, and promotional capabilities. We have significantly boosted EAG's social media presence through regular updates across LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. EAG's posts now consistently achieve above-average engagement compared to similar-sized nonprofits on these platforms.

Additionally, EAG has participated in more community events to raise awareness about our resources and programs. Promotional materials such as pens, brochures, postcards, and stickers are now distributed at these events and those hosted by EAG.







Scaling Up Our Space

EAG reached a new peak of 11 employees working in-office this summer, highlighting the need for additional workspaces. In response, we undertook an office space expansion that meets the needs of current team members with room to accommodate anticipated future growth.

The new extension features a dedicated intern office and a conference room equipped with technology that will encourage collaboration and help us facilitate more efficient meetings. The expansion also created additional storage space, allowing us to better organize ourselves. These upgrades reflect our commitment to intentional growth that benefits employees and partners alike as we continue to mature as an organization.

Funding & Support Partners

Dear Contributors,

On behalf of the Economic Action Group, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your generous support this year. As a community and economic development nonprofit serving the Mahoning Valley, we face significant challenges in our mission to create jobs, attract businesses, and improve lives in our community.

Your contributions make our work possible, enabling us to support small businesses, drive community improvement, and foster entrepreneurial growth. Together, we are making Youngstown a better place to live, work, and play.

Thank you for believing in our mission and joining us in building a brighter future for our community.

With sincere appreciation,

Marcelle Wilson

Development Manager



Supporters

Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc. City of Youngstown Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley

Marcelle B. Wa

Fibus Family Foundation

Flying High, Inc.

JobsOhio

National Science Foundation

Ohio Department of Development

PNC Foundation

The Raymond John Wean Foundation

The Youngstown Foundation

Thomases Family Endowment

Western Reserve Port Authority

Youngstown State University

Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber

Youngstown 1st Ward Councilman, Julius Oliver

Youngstown 4th Ward Councilman, Mike Ray

Individual Donors

Debora R. Flora

Dr. Marcelle Wilson

in memory of Reverend and Mrs. Harold Wilson, Jr.

Erin Driscoll

Excelsior Consulting

Ian & Krista Beniston

JoAnn & Marty Stock

Justin Mondok

Kennedy Kish

Morgen & Nicholas Chretien

Rebecca L. Keck

Shea MacMillan

Tricia A. D'Avignon

Valley Partners

Financials

Statement of Activity		
Income	FY23	FY24
Direct Public Support	\$ 8,000	\$ 12,314
Government Grants	\$ 35,496	\$ 107,004
Foundations and Banks	\$ 103,500	\$ 291,000
Other Types of Income	\$ 13,661	\$ 1,123
Program Income	\$ 136,849	\$ 98,964
Total Income	\$ 297,506	\$ 510,405
Expenses		
Payroll	\$ 178,055	\$ 265,566
Program Expenses	\$ 33,648	\$ 84,953
Operations	\$ 4,969	\$ 20,212
Contract Services	\$ 32,774	\$ 34,258
Conferences and Meetings	\$ 3,389	\$ 9,766
Office and Software Expenses	\$ 4,759	\$ 8,685
Facilities and Equipment	\$ 8,737	\$ 10,133
Advertising & Promotional	\$ 1,699	\$ 3,338
Other Expenses	\$ 754	\$ 1,096
Total Expenses	\$ 268,783	\$ 438.007
Net Income	\$ 28,724	\$ 72,898
Statement of Financial Position		
Assets	FY23	FY24
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 346,647	\$ 366,071
Other Current Assets	\$ 25,803	\$ 1,094
Total Current Assets	\$ 372,450	\$ 367,165
Other Assets	-	\$ 5,000
Total Assets	\$ 372,450	\$ 372,165
Liabilities and Equity		
Total Liabilities	\$ 13,526	\$ 45,391
Total Equity	\$ 358,924	\$ 326,775
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 372,450	\$ 372,165

January

April



2024 Highlights







THANK YOU

The Economic Action Group team is deeply grateful for a productive 2024 and is excited to build upon this momentum in 2025. Your support empowers us to keep driving progress and making a lasting impact in the Mahoning Valley.







<u>ANNUAL REPORT</u>

www.eagworks.org | 234-228-9694

100 East Federal St #422, Youngstown, OH 44503





