



NOACA Economic Development Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2025

NOACA Offices

1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio

No Quorum

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Ms. Valarie McCall chaired the Economic Development Subcommittee meeting that convened at 8:40 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

No action was taken on the June 27, 2025, meeting minutes due to a lack of quorum.

Public Comment

No public comment was made at this meeting.

Executive Director's Report

No report was presented at this meeting.

Director Grace Gallucci thanked the members for attending and actively participating in the meeting.

Action Items

No action items were presented at this meeting.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Performance Measures Data and Analysis Review

Mr. Ronnie Blackshear presented information on the following:

- 17 Key Topic Areas Identified in SWOT Analysis Process
- Performance Measures Data Analysis
- NOACA–CSU Center for Economic Development Partnership to Provide Data and Insights
- Focus Areas: Geography, Demographics, Socioeconomic, Housing, and Business

Ms. Molly Schnoke reviewed the Center's online mapping tool data portal. She focused on the neighborhood typology in Northeast Ohio.

Ms. Julie McNabb asked if reports could be generated from the data, including customized reports based on what the Subcommittee sees.

Ms. Schnoke replied that while external users could access and use the data, CSU would provide NOACA with supporting tables, charts, and maps. Once collected, the back-end data would be available to the full subcommittee and partners.

Ms. McNabb clarified that if the subcommittee wanted specifics, such as by zip code or other details, CSU could generate those reports based on the available data.

Ms. Schnoke confirmed, noting that while zip codes do not align neatly with census tracts and can be harder to match, CSU can provide reports tailored to specific requests using available data.

Mr. Paul Herdeg noted that the current federal administration has shifted its funding priorities and suggested the subcommittee track what agencies value, identify corresponding data, and share findings. For example, the Department of Transportation once indicated interest in funding areas with higher birth rates. He recommended monitoring federal signals to determine what data is now considered important.

Mr. Blackshear said federal priorities have shifted toward job creation and private investment, which changes the subcommittee's focus. He noted past efforts to collect information were slow but emphasized the need to build a shared data repository. As federal expectations evolve, the group must adjust the type of data it collects, which could also support applications to funding sources beyond the US EDA (Economic Development Administration) .

Ms. Schnoke agreed with Mr. Herdeg, noting federal agencies now emphasize job creation and private investment. She said CSU's database, built on 106 variables, can expand with new priorities, incorporates all U.S. census tracts, and can add partner datasets. The subcommittee must determine data access level (public or restricted) and set a process for adding new datasets.

Ms. McCall noted the presentation contained a lot of information and suggested that staff share the link so everyone can explore the mapping tool. She added that even a quick look reveals valuable insights and expressed interest in exploring it further.

Ms. Schnoke explained that the data is broken down by U.S. Census regions, with the Southeast split into A and B due to size. The tool allows sorting by region, city, and city size (large, medium, small), displaying maps and searchable data. Multiple data views are available, though not all in one file. The dataset is publicly accessible on the Center's website under "Investing in the Middle," or via a Google search.

Director Gallucci noted that NOACA's partnership with the CSU Center provides additional expertise to help maintain the CEDS and develop performance measures that are useful for the organization and its members. She also noted that the partnership has a financial impact, as CSU will be paid through an interagency agreement to support NOACA.

Mr. Blackshear added that the agreement is still in progress but will formalize CSU's provision of data to NOACA. The next step is to set priorities for measuring CEDS performance, agreeing on key data and focus areas—such as manufacturing, workforce, healthcare, aerospace, and innovation—with workforce development emphasized given federal priorities.

Director Gallucci explained that CSU will assist NOACA not only with performance metrics but also with maintaining the CEDS document. She invited discussion on whether anything is missing in the partnership that could strengthen NOACA's support, noting the agency currently lacks dedicated economic development staff.

Ms. Schnoke said the initial work involves updating data, creating an ArcGIS mapping tool for subcommittee testing and public use, and covering startup costs and data access. Most data are public, with additional inputs possibly from partners such as CSU, GCP, Team NEO, counties, or Metro Parks.

Mr. Blackshear emphasized the need for the Subcommittee to collaborate in providing actual data—not just reports—so a reliable database can be built for grant applications and private funding opportunities.

Ms. McCall said she looks forward to the development of a central data resource, which will simplify access compared to searching multiple city, county, and web sources. She also noted it is a good partnership.

Director Gallucci said CSU will contact Subcommittee members to identify data for inclusion in the metrics. She noted that CSU's involvement should help improve participation in data collection, which has been challenging.

Mr. Gall said NOACA is moving forward, but the agreement is not yet in place, and a contract still needs to be developed. NOACA will have to bring it to the Board for approval, with a possible December start and a 6-month to 1-year timeline. He asked what timeframe is expected for a usable product.

Director Gallucci said the agreement is under \$75,000, so it does not need Board approval. The agreement is already drafted. Today's goal was to confirm the Subcommittee's comfort with the direction. NOACA intends to sign and begin work as soon as possible.

Ms. McNabb asked whether the first draft of the agreement allows for revisions if the data received is not exactly what the subcommittee needs.

Ms. Schnoke said revisions are not explicitly in the agreement but are within the normal scope of this type of work.

Director Gallucci added that the agreement should include language ensuring CSU can handle performance metric review, analysis, collection, and any necessary revisions on NOACA's behalf, reflecting needed flexibility.

Mr. Blackshear noted the initial draft does not include this language, but that he and Ms. Schnoke are working on a revised version.

Ms. Schnoke said she and Mr. Blackshear are refining the agreement language. Once the contract is executed, work will begin immediately, starting with existing historical data (mostly through 2020) and updating recent years. Preliminary mapping, reports, and data tables would be shared with the Subcommittee, which would decide what becomes part of the public-facing tool.

Mr. Khalid Bahhur asked who will maintain the product once it matures, whether NOACA will take over or CSU will continue updates annually.

Ms. Schnoke said CSU is expected to maintain the public portal and updates if resources allow. The contract ensures NOACA will receive all back-end data files for their use, even if maintenance eventually transfers to another entity. The product will remain publicly accessible, and NOACA can use the data for other purposes as needed.

Mr. Bahhur asked if any part of the system is proprietary.

Ms. Schnoke said CSU's ArcGIS platform is proprietary, but NOACA has GIS capabilities, so transferring the portal should be feasible.

Mr. Bahhur emphasized that the agreement should ensure NOACA retains all data—historical and future—if CSU opts out, to avoid losing progress or having to rebuild the system.

Ms. Schnoke said the transfer depends on GIS subscriptions; CSU cannot provide access to its subscription, but NOACA has similar GIS expertise and could use the data with its own platform.

Director Gallucci added that the agreement can clarify that if a transfer occurs, NOACA would maintain its own subscription, but all back-end data would be provided.

Mr. Bahhur asked who will have access to the system, how they will gain it, and how it will be shared with the public.

Ms. Schnoke said CSU will manage data creation, collection, and back-end files, while the public will access approved data through a free portal on CSU's website, like the existing setup.

Director Gallucci added that marketing the resource will primarily be NOACA's responsibility, using it to support the Economic Development District and CEDS, though CSU can partner in promotion.

Mr. Bahhur said it is important for the community to know when the product is live, as it demonstrates progress and is a valuable resource.

Mr. Gall encouraged rapid development, noting the product's importance for showcasing regional projects and attracting potential clients, and thanked CSU for their efforts.

Director Gallucci stated the goal is to have the agreement signed next week.

Ms. McCall urged members to review the CSU Center's data now to identify gaps and provide feedback. She stressed the urgency of advancing NOACA's economic development role and noted the value of consolidating data while coordinating with other agencies, such as the City of Cleveland's GIS portal. She emphasized clarifying how the Center's data differs from other sources, suggested beginning marketing efforts now with a focus on census tract-level information, and concluded that clearly communicating the Center's unique value will be essential.

Ms. Schnoke explained that developing the mapping tool took about three months to build and test, ensuring it was accessible, user-friendly, and not overwhelming. She noted that a key factor in launching will be when partners provide their data, though the Subcommittee may consider moving forward even if the tool is not fully complete. She emphasized balancing urgency with practicality, especially if delays stem from proprietary data, and confirmed that the CSU Center will continue working with Mr. Blackshear, NOACA staff, and partners to coordinate data sharing and timing.

Mr. Bahhur asked Ms. Schnoke if CSU has a list of organizations that data is needed from.

Mr. Blackshear said the identified performance measures each have data sources as a starting point, but few stakeholders have confirmed ownership of specific data. He expressed hope that

moving forward, NOACA will secure the needed data and continue adding performance measures, noting the current set is not fixed and will evolve over time.

Ms. McCall suggested arranging a meet-and-greet with agency CIOs, since they manage data access and may be unaware of NOACA's efforts, making it easier to secure the needed information.

Mr. Blackshear noted he has spoken with some CIOs, but data release remains a challenge since some are protective. He emphasized that NOACA is only requesting non-private data that can benefit the wider community.

Ms. McCall noted that while data access may seem simple, it poses logistical and legal challenges. She suggested linking to external sources when direct access is unavailable and urged NOACA not to delay the launch while waiting on uncontrollable data. She stressed the tool's value for residents seeking neighborhood-level insights, citing shifting demographics on Cleveland's southeast side and the need to monitor development to avoid unintended gentrification. She concluded that NOACA should launch with available data and expand over time.

Director Gallucci expressed support of Ms. McCall's idea of a CIO meet-and-greet, noting it would be valuable to announce the Cleveland State partnership and explain the project directly to those who manage the data. While executive directors may understand NOACA's goals, it is important to engage the CIOs through a roundtable at NOACA or Cleveland State and include them in the process.

Ms. McCall supported the idea, noting fragmented government data and the value of real-time tools like 311, Citizens, and Ring. She said consolidating data shows strong potential and suggested involving officials and their CIOs in the Cleveland State partnership announcement to validate the effort, raise visibility, and highlight Cleveland State's Center for Economic Development.

Ms. Schnoke added that sustainability and access depend on first developing the architecture. Much of the data shown is already public and can be used to launch the project, while proprietary data can be added later. She emphasized that the initial product will not be the final one but a framework that expands as more partners share information, like Cleveland's open data portal. The goal is to build capacity for Northeast Ohio to advance technically over time.

Ms. McCall said developers should be another focus group, noting significant growth in places like Lorain County. She added that if she were a developer deciding where to invest, this would be the first tool she would use, emphasizing the vast opportunities ahead.

Ms. Gina Hofstetter wondered whether there had been discussion about monitoring usage once the tool goes live—such as visitor volume, landing pages, and types of data accessed—suggesting this information could be valuable alongside marketing efforts.

Reports/Updates

Economic Development District Status

Mr. Blackshear reported that the Economic Development District application was submitted in January 2024 and reviewed in February 2025. In April, the EDA requested additional information on population, regional economic function, distressed criteria eligibility, and support letters from most counties.

Mr. Blackshear outlined the status of the EDD process, noting that the steps that have been completed: the region has an adopted CEDS, a board-approved EDS charter was added to the Code of Regulations, and the EDA's distress criteria has been met.

Mr. Blackshear invited Ms. Schnoke to report on activities taking place at the federal level.

Ms. Schnoke reported that EDA has ended the University Center program, along with other technical assistance programs, due to federal funding cuts. While the Center for Economic Development at Cleveland State relied heavily on this support, it will continue providing research and technical assistance to the community. She noted the decision was made before the current congressional budget discussions.

Ms. McCall asked how the elimination of the EDA Center Program relates to what the Subcommittee is trying to do.

Ms. Schnoke explained that while CSU's Center for Economic Development will continue its work, it will no longer operate as an EDA center, meaning the direct communication link with EDA and its program updates has been lost. She noted other technical assistance programs, including the STEM and University Center programs, were also cut, and encouraged the Subcommittee to reach out for more details.

Ms. McCall asked how these cuts affect NOACA's CEDS effort and whether it risks pursuing something that may no longer exist.

Mr. Blackshear said the impact was unclear but stressed a positive outlook, noting NOACA will stay in contact with representatives and continue moving forward, as some programs remain available.

Ms. McCall suggested that the next NOACA subcommittee meetings consider how this program cut might impact small businesses, including minority-owned businesses and technical assistance programs. She noted the importance of understanding the full scope of the cuts, as some legislators and officials may be unaware. She recommended that the Board and the Governor's Office be informed, since the impact likely extends beyond Cleveland State to other universities as well.

Mr. Bahhur asked about the budget impact on CSU.

Ms. Schnoke replied that it is about \$150,000 annually, noting CSU has held the University Center designation since 1985.

Mr. Bahhur then asked if CSU is considering other strategies to cover the gap.

Ms. Schnoke confirmed yes, and explained strategies in process. She added that the Center for Economic Development is fully funded by contractual work with no direct CSU budget support, which is typical for similar centers nationwide. Many are under pressure as organizations are cautious with budget decisions, making progress slow but ongoing. Ms. Schnoke also noted that some university centers, such as those in the Chicago region serving rural communities, are already shutting down.

Mr. Bahhur suggested engaging county economic development directors to help CSU strategize a path forward, noting it would be better to build on existing efforts rather than reinvent the wheel. He proposed setting up a meeting to explore potential strategies.

Ms. McCall agreed, stressing the region must continue moving forward despite the loss of funding. She highlighted the value of the NOACA–Center partnership and suggested exploring conversations with local communities about aligning with their economic development departments. She noted the possibility of a subscription or membership model to support the Center’s work, adding that while \$150,000 is significant, it is manageable. She asked Ms. Schnoke to keep the Subcommittee updated.

Old Business

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business

Ms. McCall thanked attendees and emphasized the importance of participation. She noted that many members listed on the Subcommittee were absent, making it difficult to achieve a quorum and approve minutes. She stressed that committees are vital to NOACA’s work and urged appointing agencies to replace inactive members with those committed to attending. She added that all key organizations are represented on the Economic Subcommittee, yet their absence limits progress, and reminded members that decisions are made “at the table.”

Mr. Herdeg observed that NOACA tends to form large committees, which can dilute participation. He suggested that improving attendance depends on demonstrating value, such as keeping members informed about current economic development issues and federal updates.

Ms. McCall recalled her long involvement with NOACA. She noted past criticism of exclusivity but highlighted progress in broadening participation. She stressed restoring accountability by ensuring members or their representatives are actively involved, adding that with so much happening regionally, member presence and engagement are more critical than ever.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

Note: Additional information on the agenda items can be found on [NOACA’s website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).



**Economic Development Subcommittee
2025 Attendance Record**

Meeting Dates	3/28/25	6/27/25	9/26/25	12/5/25
BAHHUR, Khalid (Alternate not Designated)	X		X	
BEVERAGE III, Morris W. (Morgan McIntosh, Alternate)	A	A		
BIBB, Justin (Jeff Epstein, Alternate)				
BRAKEY, Carolyn (Shane Hajjar, Alternate)				
BURKE, Bethia (Jeff Sleasman, Alternate)	A	A		
CIMPERMAN, Joe (Alternate not Designated)				
COCCO, Dennis (Jim Walburn, Alternate)	A	X		
DEEMER, Michael (Sam Rocco, Alternate)	A		A	
DENTLER, Bethany (Jake Altman, Alternate)				
DOLAN, Matt (Christine Nelson, Alternate)				
GALLAGHER, Marty (Dave Greenspan, Alternate)	A	X		
GALLO, Tony L. (Alternate not Designated)	X	X		
GILBERT, David (Hannah Belsito, Alternate)		A	A	
HARRISON, Aaron M. (Julie McNabb, Alternate)		A	A	
HERDEG, Paul (Vaughn Johnson, Alternate)	X	X	X	
HOFSTETTER, Gina (Alternate not Designated)		X	X	

Meeting Dates	3/28/25	6/27/25	9/26/25	12/5/25
KARP , Ethan (Tracy Francescone, Alternate)	A	A	A	
JACONO , Julie (Matt Riehl, Alternate)				
MOHORCIC , Patrick (Myranda Keister, Alternate)	X	A		
MCNAIR , Tom (Jeoivrose Bourdeau Small, Alternate)	A			
TBD (former member Emily Garr Pacetti as of 9/25) (Merissa Piazza, Alternate)	X		A	
RIDDELL , Jeff (John Gall, Alternate)	A	X	A	
RONAYNE , Chris (Debbie Berry, Alternate) (Annie Pease, Alternate on 3/28/25) (Vaughn Johnson, Alternate on 6/27/25)	A	A	A	
ROSE , Michelle (Alternate not Designated)				
SCHNOKE , Molly (Alternate not Designated)	X	X	X	
SHAH , Baiju R. (David Ebersole, Alternate)	A			
TBD , Cuyahoga Community College (Alternate not Designated)				
TBD (Matt Riehl, Alternate)				
Equity Subcommittee Chair and Alternate				
BLACKWELL , Annette (Aria Johnson, Alternate)	A			
Business Advisory Council Chair and Alternate				
McCALL , Valarie (Kevin S. Schmotzer, Alternate)	X	X	X	

X = Member Attend

A = Alternate Attend