



Vibrant NEO Champion Awards CALL FOR ENTRIES

Background

Vibrant NEO is pleased to announce its first annual Vibrant NEO Champion Awards program. Vibrant NEO is a non-profit organization supporting implementation of [Vibrant NEO 2040](#), an important community-based strategic development framework for the 12-county Northeast Ohio region. Since 2014, local governments, non-profits, private corporations, individuals and organizations across the region have been working on initiating programs and projects that support the four major themes of the framework:

1. Strengthen Established Communities
2. Increase Transportation Choice
3. Preserve and Protect Natural Resources
4. Promote Collaboration and Efficiency

In 2018, Vibrant NEO's Board of Directors created the Champion Awards program as a way to publicly recognize these exceptional efforts. The program will include a total of 9 possible awards that will be presented on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 from 11:30 am to 2:00 p.m. at Cleveland State University.

The awards will recognize initiatives – projects, programs and policies – of communities, businesses, nonprofits, and civic groups that demonstrate leadership in the advancement of the Vibrant NEO vision and the four themes outlined above. In addition, a special Champion Award will be given to an individual for their leadership in regional sustainability.

Winners will be recognized at the awards presentation program and will be encouraged to display the Vibrant NEO award logo designation in their advertising and promotional material. All entries which are exemplary of at least one of the four themes and nine vision statements will be housed on the Vibrant NEO website. This will grow over time into a database of projects that can be used as examples across the region.

Entries and Eligibility

Projects, programs, policies and other related efforts that have been completed or are in development are eligible for consideration. Entries may be submitted by non-profit and for-profit organizations, governmental entities, and civic groups. Self-nominations are welcome.

Entries must demonstrate how they contribute to Vibrant NEO's regional sustainability goals. Judging preference will be given to initiatives that either involve, or have the potential to positively affect, more than one jurisdiction (city, county, MPO), or more than one discipline (housing, transportation, natural resources, workforce development, economic development, etc.)

As Vibrant NEO is a regionally focused organization with broad long-range goals, we encourage entries that involve collaboration across political jurisdictions. All entries must demonstrate the potential for economic, social and/or environmental benefit for residents of one or more of the 12 NEOSCC counties: Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning, Lake, Geauga, Portage, Stark, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Wayne and Lorain counties.

While we request one application per initiative, and one designated lead proponent per application, projects that integrate more than one theme, exemplify the vision statements, and are the result of collaboration of multiple partners, are encouraged to apply and will receive higher scores.

Entry Fees

There is no fee for entry in the awards program.

Deadline and Schedule

THE DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS 12 P.M., FRIDAY OCTOBER 19, 2018.

Entries must be submitted in digital form to vibrantneo@mpo.noaca.org by this date and time.

Schedule of key dates:

Call for entries	Tuesday, September 4, 2018
Entry deadline	October 19, 2018 at 12pm
Judging	October 22-31, 2018
Awards Program	November 14, 2018

The Champion Awards Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 from 11:30 am to 2:00 p.m. at Cleveland State University, Levin College of Urban Affairs. All applicants are strongly encouraged to attend. Lunch will be available for a pre-paid fee; a brown bag no-charge registration option will be available for students. See the registration page for more information.

Awards Structure

All submitted awards will be reviewed together. From the submittals, up to eight (8) awards will be given by the judges in two categories:

1. Vibrant NEO 2040 Regional Sustainability Awards (up to 5 awards)

Theme awards will recognize completed or in-development projects, initiatives, policy proposals, great ideas, or similar efforts (initiatives) that further one or more of the four Vibrant NEO 2040 themes (see below).

2. Vibrant NEO 2040 Regional Collaboration Awards (up to 3 awards)

Up to three of the submittals may be selected to recognize initiatives that best exemplify the themes and vision recommendations from Vibrant NEO 2040, **AND** address multiple themes and/or include multiple jurisdictions or organizations in a way that has the potential for broader regional impact and scalability.

In addition, the Vibrant NEO Board will identify a Regional Champion in recognition of personal commitment and regional impact in advancing the vision and themes of Vibrant NEO 2040.

Judging Criteria

Each submittal will be reviewed by the judges in light of the four themes and supporting vision statements outlined below. ***To what extent does the project....?*** Applicants are encouraged to review the Vibrant NEO 2040 document for detailed descriptions. See <http://vibrantneo.org/>

Theme 1: Strengthen Established Communities

- strengthen communities, enhance and build upon existing assets, and improve fiscal health of the public sector
- affirmatively further fair housing

Vision Statements:

1. Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities
2. Develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors between and within counties
3. Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels
4. Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options

Theme 2: Increase Transportation Choice

- grow stronger connections across the region both in transportation networks and in the system of parks and natural areas
- prioritize access over mobility

Vision Statements:

5. Enhance and coordinate the region's rail and bus services
6. Enhance walking and cycling as transportation options to increase regional mobility and improve public health

Theme 3: Preserve and Protect Natural Resources

- demonstrate effective stewardship of resources and achieve balance the natural and built environment

Vision Statements:

7. Preserve our natural areas for future generations, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and develop a regional approach to protecting air, water, and soil quality
8. Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in Northeast Ohio

Theme 4: Promote Collaboration and Efficiency

- work together to improve the quality of life and strengthen NEOs regional inheritance and legacy
- create a regional economy that is competitive, growing and fair

Vision Statements:

9. Increase collaboration among the region's government agencies to expand information sharing and find more cost-effective means of providing essential services

We recognize that not all communities or organizations have equal resources. Accordingly, judges will consider nominees based on how they reflect the Vibrant NEO themes rather than the size of the project or policy in terms of money spent or population affected.

Judging Process

Seven judges will make up the judging panel: one appointed by each of the 5 Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the Vibrant NEO area (Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency NOACA; Eastgate Regional Council of Governments ERCOG; Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study AMATS; Northeast Ohio Four County Planning and Development Organization NEFCO; Stark County Area Transportation Study SCATS). In addition, two at-large judges, one from the development/real estate community, and one from the design/architecture/urban planning community, will participate. Judges will use the entry materials to select finalists. Decision of the judges is final.

The Regional Champion award winner will be selected by the Vibrant NEO Board from a slate of candidates identified by the Awards Committee.

Awards Notification

Recipients of Regional Sustainability and Regional Collaboration awards will be announced at The Champion Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 from 11:30 am to 2:00 p.m. at Cleveland State University, Levin College of Urban Affairs.

Application Materials

Submittals should be in the form of one multi-page pdf document, plus digital images or supporting materials, as listed below. The entire pdf submittal should be a maximum of six pages, plus images or supporting materials.

- Application form, including a checklist showing the themes and vision statements exemplified in the initiative
- A maximum three-page narrative (single spaced) including:
 - Brief description of the initiative
 - Description of how the initiative exemplifies one or more of the four themes and nine vision statements of Vibrant NEO 2040
 - Brief description of the initiative's regional significance for sustainability
- Images and/or examples, depending on initiative type:
 - Projects: Up to five images illustrating the project plan, site, vision, and use
 - Programs: Up to five images illustrating the program in action, or as envisioned
 - Policies: A digital copy of the plan or policy, code or plan language, or other documentation.
 - Other: support documentation in digital form as appropriate.