

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Summit County earns national recognition for opiate abatement, minority contractor programs

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—The National Association of Counties (NACo) recently honored Summit County with awards for its collaborative work to abate the opioid epidemic and financial support for minority contractors. The Opioid Abatement Advisory Council (OAAC) was named Best in Category for Health, making it the top honoree in its category, and the Minority Contractor Capital Access Program (MCCAP) received an Achievement Award for Community and Economic Development. Summit County's submissions were selected for recognition from among hundreds of other applications submitted by counties throughout the nation.

After reaching settlements with opioid manufacturers and distributors, County Executive Ilene Shapiro convened the OAAC in 2020 to provide guidance and recommendations for programming and resources to help abate the opioid epidemic. The council is comprised of experts on the subject as well as individuals with lived experience with substance use disorder. The OAAC is guided by an abatement strategy developed by experts and focused on four pillars: (1) treatment, (2) system and infrastructure, (3) harm reduction, and (4) education and evidence-based prevention. To date, the OAAC has provided \$7 million in grants and lifesaving medications to local organizations, including every hospital system in the county and over 20 grassroots organizations. As other counties begin receiving settlements from opioid litigation or experience emerging health crises, the OAAC serves as a model for managing funds and prioritizing programs to address community needs.

"The OAAC is making an immediate difference in the community and creating a community landscape that prevents, treats, and reduces the harm of substance use disorder. Furthermore, the OAAC serves as a model to other counties, cities, and states seeking to effectively and equitably distribute settlements received from litigation," said County Executive Shapiro. "Combining the right resources, the right people, and the right structure, Summit County is looking toward a future where the opioid epidemic is declining and our community is thriving."

"Recognizing the opioid epidemic as a life-or-death moment for thousands of residents, our team at Public Health worked with County Executive Shapiro and her staff to convene a diverse set of experts and community members needed to combat this dire and complex crisis. Working together, we are making a real and lasting difference in our community," said Health Commissioner Donna Skoda.

The Minority Contractor Capital Access Program (MCCAP) is a collaborate initiative to provide financial and technical assistance to minority, women, veteran, disabled, and LGBTQ+ owned businesses in the construction industry in Summit County. The program is operated by the Akron Urban League and the Western Reserve Community Fund (WRCF), which serves Summit County as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). MCCAP is funded by Summit County and the City of Akron. Applicants to the program are evaluated based on need, experience, and potential for growth. Businesses accepted to the program are provided the opportunity for short-term credit to pay for costs related to specific construction contracts, as well as training and certification programs, which are offered to any interested business, even if it is not accepted into the program. MCCAP is purposefully designed to connect disadvantaged business-owners with opportunities for long-term growth and stability. As of March 2022, 14 participants have collectively won more than 112 new contracts totaling more than \$2.1 million in revenue and created 45 new jobs.

“The MCCAP idea was borne out of collaboration and made a reality due to several key stakeholders’ willingness to pool resources. Since its launch, WRCF and the Akron Urban League have shown strong collaboration in recruiting participants, guiding them through the program and helping them chart a course to long-term achievement,” said County Executive Shapiro. “Summit County and its partners support an inclusive and diverse economy in Summit County and are proud of the success of this needed program.”

“Minority-owned businesses have historically been an afterthought when establishing an economic development program like MCCAP. The program, however, is designed specifically for this extremely important segment of the business community. This effort has been successful due in large part to the collaborative nature of the program,” said Rachel Bridenstine, Executive Director, Western Reserve Community Fund.

“MCCAP has been especially valuable to minority-owned contractors in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated existing racial disparities. Launched during the pandemic, MCCAP has played an important role in providing technical assistance and financial support for hard hit minority-owned businesses and we expect it to play a pivotal role in achieving an inclusive economic recovery,” said Teresa LeGrair, President and CEO, Akron Urban League.

As a Best in Category Winner, Summit County will be recognized at the Achievement Awards Luncheon at NACo’s Annual Conference and Exposition in Adams County, Colorado in July. The complete list of NACo award recipients is at <https://www.naco.org/resources/awards-programs/achievement-awards-program-search>.

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