



Helping to **Make Erie Home**

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

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“ECGRA is an exemplary public authority delivering on the legislative promise we have been charged to enact. We look forward to continuing to lead through impact investing in partnership with local economic development agencies and the Erie County communities we proudly serve.”

— Kelly S. Hess

Chair of ECGRA Board of Directors

Our Mission – An impact investor, ECGRA’s mission is to elevate Erie County by empowering nonprofits and small businesses toward economic and community development. Since its inception, ECGRA has been authorized to distribute over \$88 million in local share gaming revenue in communities across Erie County, utilizing its nationally recognized Impact Investing model.

Assets & Equity

Assets

Checking	\$52,435.19
Savings	\$6,254,083.87
Certificates	\$15,489,910.05
Accts Receivable	\$6,214,625.00
Total Assets	\$28,011,054.11

Equity

Begin	\$21,231,061.80
Net Income	\$1,165,958.27

Board of Directors

Kelly S. Hess, Chair
Ronald G. Cleaver, Treasurer
Angie Amatangelo
Mark B. Louis

Robert S. Oberlander
Darrell A. Smith
Gary J. Winschel

ECGRA Staff

Perry Wood, Executive Director
Tom Maggio, AICP, Grants Manager
Tammi Michali, Executive Assistant

How does ECGRA work?



ECGRA is a public authority established in state law to administer local share gaming revenue in Erie County.

Erie County Council appoints the ECGRA Board of Directors to approve the distribution of grants and serve as a lead authority in Erie County's economic and community development ecosystem.



Since 2011, ECGRA has been led by economic development practitioner Perry Wood who serves as executive director. The ECGRA Board charged Wood with innovating and bringing to fruition a framework that uses gaming funds for impact investment, grants, and loans in Erie County.

Modeled after well-respected foundations across the U.S, in 2014, Wood and the board of directors adopted an Impact Investing Policy and began investing gaming funds to drive social, cultural, and economic change, as well as financial returns that help ensure Erie County's local share gaming revenue gives back to Erie County residents in perpetuity.

Impact investing is intentional investing — working to create a positive impact and directly benefit communities — without the use of taxpayer dollars.

ECGRA is committed to utilizing local share gaming funds to catalyze real, meaningful, and lasting impact in our community.

A Letter from the Executive Director

Throughout ECGRA's time in Erie County, it has proudly supported many impactful programs.

Grant funding has strengthened small businesses, revitalized neighborhoods, supported municipalities, enhanced youth and education services, and enriched Erie's overall quality of place. These areas represent the core pillars of ECGRA's mission.

One pillar moves both hearts and economic activity, helping define Erie as a great place to live, work, and play: quality of place. More specifically, the many events and festivals ECGRA funds each year that bring people together and celebrate the spirit of our community. ECGRA's longstanding support of local events and festivals has helped shape Erie's identity and create lasting memories that define what it means to live here.

This spirit of Erie County is defined by the thousands of volunteers and community members who implement our community's beloved festivals and events. Erie County's ethnic festivals are a terrific example of how communities gather to celebrate their heritage but cause a broader ripple effect that can be felt the entire summer season.

In 2024, Erie's Italian Festival suffered a loss with the passing of its longtime leader, Ron DiVecchio. While his absence is felt, his legacy will live on. The Italian Festival is one cornerstone of Erie's summer — kicked off with the Annual Troika Festival and carried through September when the Irish Festival dances us into fall — Erie's ethnic festivals are a steady presence of warmth, commitment, and a volunteer spirit that touches countless lives.

Organizing the festival without Ron in 2025 will be no small task, but the St. Paul's community will carry on — thanks to their love of community and ECGRA dollars. Just like they did through a global pandemic, Erie's other local heritage festival volunteers organized, cooked, and implemented these special events to help bring our community together and define Erie County as a good place to live and visit.

This is one of many reasons ECGRA continues to support special events like the Italian Festival — because they strengthen our sense of connection, community, and joy, even during the tough times. In 2020, ECGRA helped to keep these treasured events alive — a wise investment that will make an impact for generations to come.

— Perry Weed
Executive Director, ECGRA



"ECGRA has impacted many events and festivals, such as the Italian Festival, that have become a tradition in Erie. ECGRA's continued support will give us the room to continue Ron Divecchio's passion for delivering love and joy in the Erie community."

— Brian Ferraro
St. Paul's Italian Festival

Celebrating **Special Events** in Erie County



"ECGRA's longstanding support of local events and festivals has helped shape Erie's identity and create lasting memories that define what it means to live here."

— Perry Wood
Executive Director

AmeriMasala Festival

AmeriMasala • German Heritage Festival
Panegyri Greek Festival • St. Patrick's Irish Festival • St. Paul's Italian Festival
Troika Russian Festival • Zabawa Polish Festival



In Erie County, special events and festivals are more than just entertainment — they are a powerful expression of our shared identity.

Rooted in the region's rich cultural traditions, these events strengthen social bonds, foster cross-cultural understanding, and create opportunities for community members to come together in meaningful ways.

Since 2011, ECGRA has proudly supported this vibrant tradition by awarding hundreds of Special Events Grants to nonprofits, municipalities, and authorities contributing to Erie's dynamic cultural landscape. These grants support up to 5% of the total cost of events that are open to the public, helping to ensure access for all residents and visitors.

From beloved heritage events like the iconic Troika and Zabawa to the spirited Edinboro Highland Games and Greek Festival, ECGRA is committed to funding events that showcase the diversity and dynamism of Erie County. These gatherings foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity, while also generating valuable tourism dollars that boost our local economy.

Even during challenging times — like the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person gatherings were limited or canceled — ECGRA remained a steadfast partner to local event organizers. By providing increased funding, greater flexibility, and ongoing support, ECGRA helped sustain the spirit of community events and positioned them for a strong and vibrant recovery in the years that followed.

Special events contribute to Erie County's broader economic development goals. They attract visitors, drive spending at local businesses, and help shape a sense of place that makes our region more appealing to current and future residents.

By investing in local events, ECGRA is investing in the heart of Erie County — its people, its stories, and its spirit.

ECGRA is Erie's Impact Investor

What is impact investing?

ECGRA awards grants to economic development agencies, nonprofits, and municipalities throughout the year, funded by gaming revenue dollars.

ECGRA has expanded its focus to impact investments at every level of community — from schools to small businesses to neighborhoods to municipalities — intended to uplift not only the regional economy, but also its society, culture, and environment.

There isn't a corner of the county that isn't touched by ECGRA grant money — improving Erie's economic and community development forecast.

It's about **People**.

It's about **Place**.

It's about **Progress**.



Troika Festival



Troika Festival

Five Areas of **Impact** across Erie County

Quality of Place

Neighborhoods & Communities

Youth & Education

Municipalities

Small Business

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“Across Erie County, ECGRA’s investments are making a real and lasting impact. These grants are helping to build more accessible, connected communities and restore a strong sense of place. By supporting projects that foster pride and belonging, ECGRA is driving meaningful change in neighborhoods throughout the region.”

— Rock Copeland
Erie County Councilman



Impact **Quality of Place**

"The Jefferson Educational Society is deeply grateful for ECGRA's continued support of the Global Summit through its Special Events Grant program. By supporting events like the Global Summit, ECGRA isn't just funding programs — they're investing in a sense of belonging, pride, and possibility. Their commitment to building strong, vibrant communities throughout Erie County is what makes our work possible and meaningful."

— Chelsea Oliver

Director of Marketing and Community Engagement



The Jefferson Education Society received \$15,000 for the Global Summit.

Albion Area Fair	\$13,700.25	Christian Ministries of the Apostolic Faith	\$9,000.00
	\$7,000.00	Community Resources for Independence	\$3,138.93
Americans for the Compt. Ent. Sys. (ACES)	\$2,700.00		\$7,500.00
AmeriMasala	\$1,683.00	Crime Victim Center	\$3,313.85
	\$10,000.00	Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Foundation	\$12,516.08
Asbury Woods Partnership	\$3,363.73	Dafmark Dance Theatre	\$10,000.00
	\$21,350.00	Downtown Edinboro Arts & Music Festival	\$3,420.00
Borough of Edinboro	\$1,507.50		\$13,000.00
	\$25,000.00	Downtown North East	\$3,044.70
Borough of Girard	\$572.93		\$12,000.00
Borough of North East	\$10,000.00	Edinboro Legion Pool	\$5,394.56
Borough of Union City	\$207.00	Edinboro Market	\$14,969.00
	\$125,000.00	Edinboro Univeristy Foundation	\$2,553.75
	\$25,000.00		\$5,500.00
Borough of Wesleyville	\$869.40	Enterprise Development Fund	\$250,000.00
Boys & Girls Club of Erie	\$8,164.00	Erie Area Council of Governments	\$10,000.00
CAFÉ	\$15,000.00	Erie Art Company	\$5,000.00



Impact Quality of Place

Erie Art Museum	\$31,858.02	Inner-City Neighborhood Art House	\$7,500.00
Erie Art & Music Festival	\$5,130.00	JFK Center	\$15,000.00
	\$12,000.00	Jefferson Educational Society	\$15,000.00
Erie Arts & Culture	\$44,427.06	Lake Erie Fanfare	\$2,245.50
Erie Center for Arts & Technology	\$103,077.00		\$12,000.00
Erie County Bar Association	\$2,250.00	Lake Erie Greek Cultural Society	\$7,375.50
Erie County Fair at Wattsburg	\$12,651.75	McKean Recreation Authority	\$25,000.00
	\$11,000.00	Mercy Center for Women	\$4,059.00
Erie Homes for Children & Adults	\$3,288.60		\$15,000.00
Erie Latino Leadership Association	\$1,391.18	Mercy Hilltop Center	\$15,000.00
Erie Lions Club Save an Eye Game	\$1,125.00	Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture	\$56,157.62
Erie Philharmonic	\$89,429.19	Messiah Lutheran Church	\$5,000.00
Erie Playhouse	\$46,026.19	Minority Community Investment Coalition	\$250,000.00
Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership	\$4,500.00	Presque Isle Light Station	\$1,011.15
Erie Roller Derby	\$364.14	Presque Isle Partnership	\$4,990.50
Erie United Methodist Alliance	\$3,150.00		\$7,500.00
Erie Western PA Port Authority	\$5,652.90	Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity	\$2,700.00
Erie Yesterday	\$14,000.00	Saint Patrick Church	\$7,389.66
Erie Zoological Society	\$174,212.48	Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network	\$5,031.16
Erie's Black Wall Street	\$12,000.00		\$15,000.00
	\$15,000.00	Springfield Township	\$1,445.00
expERIENCE Children's Museum	\$26,676.06	The Goodell Project	\$2,947.50
Film Society of Northwestern PA	\$5,458.50	The Nonprofit Partnership	\$32,043.47
	\$10,000.00	Triangle DAR	\$10,000.00
Flagship Niagara League	\$55,236.53	Union City Pride	\$946.13
Fly Erie Fund LLC	\$125,000.00	Union Township	\$50,000.00
Greater Erie Community Action Committee	\$167,586.23	Veterans Miracle Center of Erie	\$15,000.00
Hagen History Center	\$70,130.85	WQLN Public Media	\$13,000.00
Harborcreek Community Engagement Team	\$936.00	Waterford Community Fair Association	\$8,685.00
Harborcreek Township	\$1,350.00		\$13,500.00
Headwaters Natural Resource Center Trust	\$9,500.00	YMCA of Corry	\$7,000.00
Heberle's Heartstrings	\$1,500.00	YMCA of Greater Erie	\$330.75
Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church	\$7,065.00	Young Artists Debut Orchestra	\$4,366.80
Hornby School Restoration Society	\$6,300.00		\$15,000.00
Humane Society of NWPA	\$7,074.00		
Impact Corry	\$3,472.79		
	\$11,000.00		
		TOTAL 2024	\$2,389,512.89
		TO DATE	\$28,717,955



Impact **Quality of Place**

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“ECGRA’s investment helps us do more than run a museum – it helps us fulfill a mission. ECGRA’s funding allows us to reduce barriers to entry by offering significantly discounted admission for families with SNAP EBT benefits. This isn’t just about savings; it’s about ensuring that every child in Erie County has the opportunity to grow, imagine, and learn through play. That kind of access ensures that play-based learning is not a luxury, but a shared experience across our entire community.”

— Ainslie Brosig

Executive Director, expERIENCE Children’s Museum





Impact **Quality of Place**



ECGRA awarded the 2024 Special Events grants during a joint press conference with 2024 Community Assets grant recipients.



Through the Lead Assets & Endowments Grant with The Erie Community Foundation, ECGRA distributed \$594,154 of earnings. The endowment fund, held in trust at Erie Community Foundation, totals \$16.8 million as of 2024.

"These funds represent our ongoing commitment to create a positive impact on some of the primary pillars of Erie County's quality of place."

— Perry Wood, Executive Director of ECGRA

"Glow Wild transformed the way visitors experience the zoo during its centennial anniversary season and helped showcase Erie in a whole new light."

— Roo Kojancie, CEO and President of the Erie Zoo



Erie Zoo Glow Wild received \$174,212.



Impact Neighborhoods & Communities

The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network is reimagining its longtime bike program with BikeErie as the Erie Bike Co-Op, thanks to support from ECGRA and The Erie Community Foundation. Located on East 26th Street, the community bike workshop now offers full-service repairs, donated bikes, and a work/trade program that makes cycling more accessible for all.



"The bike program is a valuable resource — not only for bike enthusiasts, but also for neighbors who rely on bicycles as their primary mode of transportation. We're grateful to ECGRA for helping us expand this effort and deepen our impact in the community."

— Patrice Swick
Neighborhood Engagement Specialist at SSJ

Bike Erie Co-Op received \$15,000 from ECGRA through a Community Centers Grant.

Bayfront Eastside Taskforce	\$100,000.00	Explore the Possibilities	\$100,000.00
Borough of Edinboro	\$80,000.00	Fairview Township	\$175,000.00
Borough of North East	\$80,000.00	Fort LeBoeuf Historical Society	\$70,000.00
Borough of Union City	\$125,000.00	Greater Erie Community Action Committee	\$50,000.00
	\$100,000.00	Harvest 912	\$15,000.00
	\$75,000.00	Impact Corry	\$125,000.00
City of Erie	\$205,000.00		\$60,000.00
Downtown Girard	\$125,000.00		\$100,000.00
	\$80,000.00		\$100,000.00
Downtown North East	\$87,500.00	North East Community Foundation	\$50,000.00
East Side Renaissance	\$50,000.00	Our West Bayfront	\$50,000.00
Erie City Moms	\$75,000.00	Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network	\$100,000.00
Erie Downtown Partnership	\$125,000.00	Union Township	\$50,000.00

TOTAL 2024 \$2,352,500.00
TO DATE \$10,558,953.50



Impact **Neighborhoods & Communities**

With support from ECGRA's Anchor Building and Renaissance Block programs, the Bayfront Eastside Taskforce is bringing new life to the neighborhood.

“While on its surface people may think ECGRA Renaissance Block facade grants are primarily about aesthetics, I can tell you that they are so much more. Renaissance Block does help make part of the neighborhood look better. Mostly, these grants help the neighborhood feel better, be better in a real, tangible way that goes far beyond improving property value.”

— **Marcia Farrell**

Grants Director for the Bayfront East Side Taskforce



Impact Neighborhoods & Communities

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“This ECGRA grant is helping all of Erie County, but in historically underinvested and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods like the City of Erie’s lower East side. ECGRA investments are moving the needle faster and further,” said Erie County Councilman André R. Horton. “ECGRA grants are strategically and transparently invested, which makes an impact for residents by providing a more accessible community with a stronger sense of place.”



2025 Grant Awarding – ECGRA awarded \$183,245 to 16 deserving community centers.



The Erie Roller Derby hosted the 2024 Bayfront Bruisefest Tournament, supported by ECGRA. ECGRA funded the tournament in part through the 2024 Special Events grant.

PennWest Edinboro hosted the 30th annual Edinboro Highland Games and Scottish Festival. ECGRA is a proud sponsor of the festival through the 2024 Special Events Grant.





Impact Youth & Education

GECAC's Earn+Learn program offers summer job opportunities to 150 youth in Erie County, placing them with over 50 local businesses and nonprofits. The program provides job readiness training, career exploration and real-world work experience for youth ages 14 to 21.



"ECGRA's investment in our youth not only helps build job skills, but also builds confidence in their potential."

— Dr. Ben Wilson
CEO of GECAC

Greater Erie Community Action Committee \$167,586.23

TOTAL 2024 \$167,586.23
TO DATE \$2,503,559.55

With support from ECGRA's Youth & Education program, The Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC) is empowering local students through its Earn + Learn Program — building skills, confidence, and brighter futures.



Impact Municipalities

In 2025, ECGRA continued to uphold its commitment to the municipalities neighboring Presque Isle Downs and Casino — advancing its mission to strengthen Erie County through strategic investments in infrastructure, public safety, and quality of life. Under the unique agreement established in 2010, more than \$1.77 million was distributed this year alone to support essential services.

These funds help local governments meet the ongoing demands of development by maintaining roads and public facilities, enhancing emergency response capabilities, and sustaining vital human services. By reinvesting gaming revenue into the communities most directly impacted, ECGRA is driving equity, stability, and shared prosperity across the region.

County of Erie	\$167,785.43
Girard Township	\$10,000.00
Greene Township	\$167,785.43
Jefferson Educational Society	\$100,000.00
McKean Township	\$167,785.43
Millcreek Township	\$167,785.43

Summit Township	\$686,395.03
Washington Township	\$43,625.00
Waterford Township	\$167,785.43

TOTAL 2024 \$1,778,947.18
TO DATE \$30,700,113.97



Impact Small Business

ECGRA Supports Downtown Erie in Largest Single Investment in History

The largest one-time investment in ECGRA history will go toward building an environment that brings critical business to Erie. First Assent offers cutting-edge life science and technology specialties. Their unique process is crucial to diversifying the Erie region and its economic needs.

The First Assent xDRIVE Platform is a first-in-kind medical oncology decision support system, which utilizes artificial intelligence to help sequence cancers, resulting in better decision-making for doctors as they work with their patients to treat and cure each cancer uniquely.

With plans to build out two floors which will house First Assent, ECGRA has invested \$500,000 in funds to help improve the I-HACK building owned by Gannon University.

"Fighting Cancer is never done in a silo; it takes a committed team, and the Erie community embodies that spirit of collaboration. Thanks to our generous donors, the Lutheran Foundation and ECGRA, we are honored to establish a state-of-the-art lab right here in Erie.

I-HACK will become the epicenter and beacon of hope for tens of thousands of people in Pennsylvania and beyond."

— Jim Foote
CEO of First Ascent Biomedical



Gannon University	\$500,000.00
TOTAL 2024	\$500,000.00
TO DATE	\$16,459,750.00



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