Clearly Ahead Development
Newsletter

FALL 2026 EDITION

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Clearly Ahead Hires Finance and Development Manager



Clearly Ahead Development Board of Directors is pleased to announce the hiring of Heather Chelgren as Finance and Development Manager.

In this role, Chelgren will oversee the organization's daily financial operations, ensure compliance with federal and state grant requirements, and manage all aspects of the revolving loan program, including underwriting and financial analysis. She will help ensure exceptional service for private businesses and community and economic development projects throughout Clearfield County.

Chelgren brings more than 20 years of experience in financial accounting, auditing, and regulatory compliance to Clearly Ahead. Her extensive background in both private-sector finance and grant administration positions her to support the organization's continued growth and mission.

"It is an honor to welcome Heather to Clearly Ahead," said Rob Swales, Chief Executive Officer. *"Her expertise in financial management, grant compliance, and economic development makes her an outstanding addition to our team. Heather's leadership will strengthen our ability to support businesses and communities while advancing our mission of creating growth and expanding the tax base throughout Clearfield County."*

A graduate of Curwensville Area High School, Chelgren earned degrees in Business Accounting and Business Administration from DuBois Business College and St. Francis University.

As Finance and Development Manager, Chelgren will also lead efforts to expand and diversify Clearly Ahead's small business loan portfolio while ensuring all grant and loan-funded projects remain compliant with applicable federal and state regulations.

Since 1999, Clearly Ahead Development has facilitated the redevelopment of 32 brownfield sites throughout Clearfield County, leveraging more than $388 million in private investment, creating more than 600 new jobs, and helping retain over 2,600 full-time jobs.

Clearly Ahead Development is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to fostering economic growth and expanding opportunities for businesses and communities throughout Clearfield County, Pennsylvania.

CCIDA Revolving Loan Fund Supports Local Business Growth

The Clearfield County Industrial Development Authority (CCIDA) offers a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) providing low-cost financing to help local businesses expand and invest in their future. With a competitive 5.5% interest rate, eligible businesses in manufacturing, industrial, commercial, and warehousing sectors can access funding for real estate, construction, renovations, equipment purchases, and working capital.

Loans of up to $350,000 or 50% of total project costs are available, with a minimum 10% borrower contribution required. The program currently supports 14 local businesses across Clearfield County.

The application process is designed to be straightforward and efficient. Applicants are asked to submit a minimum of three years of financial records, along with any relevant business plans, proposals, or agreements. Funding decisions are typically made within 30 to 45 days, allowing businesses to move forward quickly with critical projects.

For more information, contact Paul McCloskey at pmccloskey@clearlyahead.com.



Greeting Members,

Welcome to the Fall edition update. Here is a snapshot of our year-to-date local economic data.

To date we have assisted 169 local businesses to help with small business decisions and planning projects. It is rewarding to work with projects that have significant job retention and job creation components in our community. Local manufacturers are investing advanced technologies into the workplace to remain competitive and introducing new products into their company that were once outsourced and/or new product lines. This helps sustain the health of businesses and creates and retains local jobs!

Out-of-area inquiries remain strong with 58 companies from 12 states and 3 foreign country expressing interest in our region. This trend continues to be in line with 2024 and 2025 performance. Foreign and domestic firms continue to seek strategic opportunities to localize production, improve logistics, and advanced technology implementation to remain competitive.

Local and out-of-area project inquiries take immense planning. Transitions often involve significant infrastructure planning, investment, lead times, and the need for technical or financial assistance—areas where Clearly Ahead is proud to help serve. Many of these projects are competitive among our community and areas out of State. This is where it is EXTREMELY important for Pennsylvania's tax policy, workforce, utility infrastructure, and benefit programs to be competitive to attract and retain advanced manufacturing projects.

If your business is planning a project or exploring new opportunities, we welcome you to reach out. We're here to support your goals and help you grow right here in Clearfield County.

Thank you for your continued support—and for choosing to call Clearfield County home.

Take care,
Rob Swales
Chief Executive Officer

Clearly Ahead Development
Newsletter
FALL 2026 EDITION
PAGE 2

Whitewater Park Designs Unveiled

New three-dimensional design renderings unveiled by Clearly Ahead Development are providing the clearest look yet at proposed in-river recreational parks in Clearfield and Curwensville, marking a significant step forward in planning for the transformation of two existing low-head dam sites along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

The proposed parks would convert currently restricted areas of the river into public recreational assets featuring opportunities for paddling, tubing, fishing and river access. The designs also incorporate a central priority raised during community meetings: maintaining existing seasonal river elevations and traditional flatwater conditions outside the designated project areas.

To evaluate that priority, the project's engineering teams conducted extensive bathymetric studies and hydraulic analysis as part of the design process. The resulting design objective is a 0.0-inch change in surface-water elevations at both project sites, while also creating opportunities to improve river safety, aquatic habitat, environmental conditions and public access.

The proposed Curwensville project could make the borough one of the first communities in Pennsylvania to remove a low-head dam and convert the former restricted water area into a public in-river recreational park.

Is this the future? Curwensville and Clearfield Whitewater Park Design Renderings









Free Outdoor Recreation Workshops for Businesses and Startups

Appalachian United Outdoors Program – Trust for Public Land

As part of Trust for Public Land's dedication to connecting more communities to the outdoors, Trust for Public Land is launching a free Community of Practice series to support outdoor recreation and open space professionals across Appalachia. Through these three-month virtual workshop series, participants will learn from regional experts, explore successful projects and promising practices, gain practical strategies to advance outdoor recreation in their communities, and build lasting connections with peers across the region. The first series will begin in September 2026, with registration now open.

Outdoor recreation is a $21 Billion industry in Pennsylvania and has the power to strengthen local economies, improve public health, and connect people to the places they call home.

Through the Appalachia United Outdoors (AUO) Community of Practice, Trust for Public Land is helping communities across Appalachia build the knowledge, partnerships, and capacity needed to create and sustain impactful outdoor recreation projects.

Your support in promoting these free workshops will help reach municipalities, counties, nonprofit organizations, school districts, and other community leaders who can benefit from expert guidance, peer learning, and future technical assistance opportunities. Together, we can help more Appalachian communities unlock the benefits of outdoor recreation.

If your business or organization is planning a project or exploring new opportunities, we welcome you to participate in the free workshops. For more information go to: https://www.tpl.org/our-work/appalachia-united-outdoors-program.