



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Country factsheet

United States

An initiative of the European Union



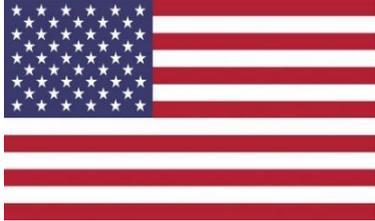


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Introduction



This document presents an overview of the cluster policy in the United States. Given its importance to contextualise the cluster policies (and related) analysed in the factsheets, a comprehensive outlook of the country in socioeconomic terms can be consulted in the [OECD Economic Survey: United States 2022](#). The “Economic Surveys” present the major challenges faced by the country, evaluates the short-term outlook, and makes specific policy recommendations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented economic shock to the United States and global economy. The American Rescue Plan¹ will change the course of the pandemic, build a bridge towards economic recovery, and invest in racial justice. The American Rescue Plan will address the large, intergenerational inequities that have worsened in the wake of COVID-19. The US clusters are not mentioned in the plan. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing Russian military aggression against Ukraine has also taken its toll on companies and industrial ecosystems in the United States, highlighting the significance of policy efforts in supporting SMEs and clusters.

In the following, a succinct overview of the cluster policy in the United States will be provided. The structure of this factsheet generally encompasses:

1. an overview of the national cluster policy and an insight into the regional cluster policy,
2. an assessment of the state of play of the national cluster policy.

¹American Rescue Plan: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/legislation/2021/01/20/president-biden-announces-american-rescue-plan/>



01

National cluster policy, programmes and initiatives



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1. National cluster policy, programmes and initiatives

In this section we provide an overview of the existing cluster policies in the United States on a national level including one national cluster policy and one sectoral policy. The breakdown is presented in the form of a table, with the first column showcasing information on the aspects which constitute the policy (beginning with 'Policy Objectives', following with 'Policy Focus', etc.) and the second and third columns representing the case of a national cluster policy in the United States.

Within the table, the text presented in bold (black) depicts standardised categories across country factsheets (56 in total for 2022), which is applied for comparative purposes. This is followed by a complementary descriptive text to provide more insights about the cluster policy in the United States.

Policy type:	National cluster policy	Sectoral policy
Policy name:	Regional Innovative Cluster Initiative	Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy Maritime policies
POLICY OBJECTIVES 	Strengthening cooperation between companies or industry and RTDI actors Increasing competitiveness and boosting scale up of SMEs Fostering innovation and strengthening innovation ecosystems Promoting employment and upgrading skills and competences	Strengthening cooperation between companies or industry and RTDI actors Increasing competitiveness and boosting scale up of SMEs Fostering R&D activities, technology development and implementation Fostering innovation and strengthening innovation ecosystems Promoting entrepreneurship, start-ups and spin-offs Promoting employment and upgrading skills and competences Enhancing the visibility of clusters Supporting cluster excellence and professionalisation of cluster management



Policy type:	National cluster policy	Sectoral policy
Policy name:	Regional Innovative Cluster Initiative	Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy Maritime policies
		Cluster analysis and support for policymaking
	The regional innovation clusters initiative is part of the US Small Business Administration's Innovative Economy Clusters Programme. The policy objectives are to support small businesses in connecting with innovation assets, support commercialization and expansion into new markets.	The goals of the Maritime Blue Strategy are to encourage a thriving low-carbon maritime industry, set Washington State as a global innovation hub, encourage collaboration amongst industry partners, increase workforce development and recruitment, and to build a world-class cluster through cluster coordination. The strategy will ensure the growth of the maritime industry through other initiatives, such as making Washington State a gateway for imports, exports, and maritime activities.
POLICY FOCUS	No specific focus	Sectoral
	There is no particular focus. At the launch of the pilot programme in 2010, there were seven innovation clusters. In 2019, an additional seven regional innovation clusters were added, these clusters focus on rural small business creation. In total there are fourteen innovation clusters.	Focuses on the Maritime Industry in Washington State.
RESPONSIBLE	In charge of drafting Provides funding Oversees the implementation	In charge of drafting In charge of implementation
 AUTHORITIES	Through the U.S. Small Business Administration, the government provides support and funding for the Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative. It also oversees how funds are allocated and implemented.	The Initiative was drafted by the Washington State Department of Commerce and is implemented by the Washington Maritime Blue cluster organisation.
	SMEs	SMEs



Policy type:	National cluster policy	Sectoral policy
Policy name:	Regional Innovative Cluster Initiative	Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy Maritime policies
BENEFICIARIES 	Research organisations Academic institutions Large firms Cluster organisations Business associations	Research organisations Academic institutions Large firms Technology centres NGOs Cluster organisations
	<p>The initiative targets clusters that support small businesses by establishing a network of large businesses, universities, SMEs, investors, research organisations and business associations.</p>	<p>Maritime Blue Cluster members include industry members such as Tote Maritime, Public Agencies and Municipalities, Research institutions such as Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Academic institutions such as the University of Washington, Non-profit organisations such as Green Marine and Maritime Clusters such Sea Ahead BlueTech Innovation.</p>
INSTRUMENTS 	Financial	Support to R&D projects, SMEs becoming cluster members, etc. Innovation: voucher, support to hire PhDs, cooperation with R&I actor
	Technical assistance	Support for soft skills development: coaching, management training, upskilling/reskilling
		Funding collaboration initiatives Support to R&D projects, SMEs becoming cluster members, etc. Financing networking events Financing start-ups
		Support for hard skill development: knowledge transfer, intellectual property, entrepreneurship, export advice, market intelligence Support for soft skills development: coaching, management training, upskilling/reskilling



Policy type:	National cluster policy		Sectoral policy
Policy name:	Regional Innovative Cluster Initiative		Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy Maritime policies
		Support for networking and partnership building (at national and/or international level)	Infrastructure: coworking spaces, offices, incubation and accelerator spaces, research centres, technology parks etc. Infrastructure: coworking spaces, offices, incubation and accelerator spaces, research centres, technology parks etc. Support for networking and partnership building (at national and/or international level) Marketing activities: advertising, communication, events, fairs, and so on
	Explanation	The initiative funds activities that increase small business' participation in cluster activities, promote innovation and enhances economic development and growth. This includes providing funds for mentorship and counselling of small businesses and providing services.	Maritime Blue Strategy funds activities that relate to R&D, incubation, education and training of workforce, communications, outreaches, and collaboration projects. Maritime Blue Strategy through in-kind support from Port of Seattle hosts the Maritime Innovation Center that provides a space for cluster programs, co-working space and accelerators and incubators.
HISTORY 	Period	Unlimited	Limited period
	Ending year (for policies with limited period)	2023	2050
	Starting year	2010	2019



Policy type:	National cluster policy	Sectoral policy
Policy name:	Regional Innovative Cluster Initiative	Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy Maritime policies
	<p>Explanation</p> <p>The policy was launched in 2010 as part of the pilot programme Innovative Economies. An additional seven cluster organisations were awarded funding in 2019. Each cluster organisation contract is for a base year and four option years. However, there is no indication that the overall initiative is for a limited period.</p>	<p>The Governor (Jay Inslee) assembled the Maritime Innovation Advisory Council in December 2017 to develop a strategy that supports the Maritime industry. The strategy is to ensure Washington State has a thriving Maritime industry by 2050.</p>
<p>BUDGET</p>	<p>Overall</p> <p>Data unavailable.</p>	<p>Data Unavailable- there is no concise information on the overall budget, however there is information about grants and donations from individual stakeholders.</p>
	<p>Annual</p> <p>Base Year-EUR 376,000 per cluster organisation.</p>	<p>Data unavailable.</p>
	<p>Source of funding</p> <p>The Small Business Administration and private investors.</p>	<p>US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, through the Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) provided a €446,627 (\$500,000) grant to the programme. €446,627 (\$500,000) was given through in-kind support from Port of Seattle (providing space for Washington Maritime Innovation Centre). The Port of Seattle also donated €8,932,559 (\$10.5 million) to the initiative and the State Government allocated €4,466,279 (\$5 million) to the initiative in the 2019-2021 Biennial Capital Budget to support efforts of Port of Seattle. Maritime Blue Cluster Members also pay a membership fee.</p>
	<p>Availability</p> <p>in-itinere</p>	<p>no policy evaluation</p>



Policy type:	National cluster policy	Sectoral policy
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POLICY EVALUATION 	Results <p>In the first 3 years of the initiative (2010-2013), participants increased by over 500%. There was also a 43% increase in small business participation in cluster activities. Employment amongst cluster-associated firms grew by 6.9%, revenues also grew by 6.9% compared to non-cluster associated firms that grew at only a 3.5% rate.</p>	<p>The strategy was implemented in December 2019, therefore there is no policy evaluation at this time.</p>
POLICY ALIGNMENT WITH THE EU PRIORITIES 	Resilience	Resilience

Source: ECCP (2022)

02

State of play of cluster policy



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2. State of play of cluster policy

This section presents an overview on the state of play of US cluster policy in the form of a quantitative and qualitative assessment. The data below illustrates how the country ranks in terms of **maturity of cluster policy at the national level**. The maturity assessment is based on a combination of factors presented in Chapter 1, which receive a score based on the existence or absence of a given element in the cluster policy.

Note: the maturity assessment does not reflect the performance of a country, but only the degree of development of their national cluster policy at the moment of data collection (Q3 2022). The assessment illustrates how the country scores for each of the four criteria (policy scope, continuity of cluster policies, evidence of performance, cluster support instruments) compared to the maximum score that they can reach. Please refer to the **Annex** for the detailed overview of the categories and the scoring system.

The table below presents an overview of the **maturity assessment for the United States** for 2022. The total score of the United States is 6 points out of 8.

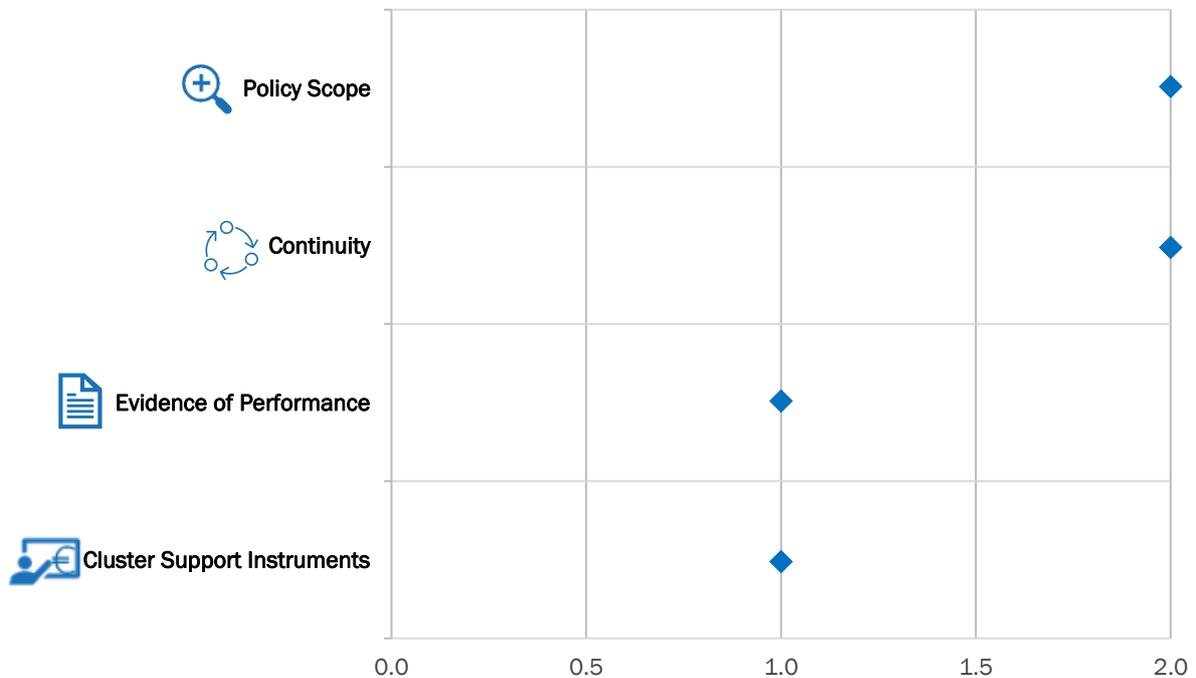
United States	MATURITY ASSESSMENT	Max score	Actual score
POLICY SCOPE	Absence of cluster policy	0	
	Broad policy	0,5	
	Sectoral policy	1	
	National and/or regional cluster policy	2	2
CONTINUITY	No cluster-specific policy available	0	
	Cluster policy established recently	0,5	
	Cluster policy established between over 2 and 10 years	1	
	Cluster policy established over 10 years ago	2	2
EVIDENCE OF PERFORMANCE	No evaluation and / or monitoring available	0	
	Existence of evaluations of past policies	0,5	
	Existence of monitoring or an ongoing / interim evaluation	1	1
	Existence of monitoring and ex-ante or ongoing / interim evaluation	2	
CLUSTER SUPPORT INSTRUMENTS	No instruments for cluster development	0	
	Financial support for cluster development in the broader and / or sectoral policy	0,5	
	Financial or technical support for cluster development in dedicated cluster policy	1	1
	Financial and technical support for cluster development in dedicated cluster policy	2	
	TOTAL (8)		

Source: ECCP (2022)



Drawing from the table above that showcases the scored points in Austria's cluster policy, the Figure below portrays the **degree of maturity** across four categories related to the national level cluster policy.

Figure 1: Maturity of cluster policy – United States of America



Source: ECCP (2022)

Policy scope

Compared to most European countries, there is no dedicated state organisation that is responsible for setting national cluster policies. However, the Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative works at national level and can be seen as a national cluster policy. At the regional level, broad policies such as the Massachusetts Life Science Initiative encourage collaboration through investing in innovation through public-private partnerships and R&D with academic and research institutions. The Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy represents a regional policy, focussed at maritime clusters.

Continuity

The United States Federal Government has not always been directly involved in cluster policies, it has however through federal agencies such as US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the past played a supportive role by creating policies and situations for cluster organizations to be successful. In recent years, the US has begun to have a more direct role in encouraging innovation clusters. In 2007, Congress passed the America Competes Act, the act includes authorisation of innovation clusters without funding. In 2010, the Obama Administration through the Small Business Administration (SBA) launched Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative (RIC) to support industry clusters. As part of the SBA's Innovative Economy Clusters programme, the agency supports two types of Innovative Economies: Regional Innovation Clusters and Advanced Defence Technologies. Since 2014, regional innovation clusters have been supported through the Regional Innovation Strategies



(RIS) program, through which regional cluster initiatives such as Washington's Maritime Blue Strategy has benefited from this. In addition, the administration created a taskforce called Taskforce for the Advancement of Regional Innovation Clusters (TARIC) to develop and administer grant competitions. Congress funding to the RIS programme remained stable during the Trump administration between 2016 and 2020, continuing to provide funding for activities such as the development of proof-of-concept centres, the expansion of incubator and accelerator programmes, and the establishment of industry-university partnerships.

At the moment two main initiatives should be mentioned. Those are the Regional Innovative Cluster Initiative and the Maritime Blue 2050 Strategy, one national initiative directed at regional clusters and a regional, sectoral approach.

Evidence of performance

Massachusetts Life Sciences Initiative: 2008-2018. Life Sciences Initiative has been very successful in creating jobs and bringing investment to the State of Massachusetts. The number of companies in the Massachusetts Life Science Centre (MLSC), the implementing agency of the Life Sciences Initiative program is 8,940. This represents a 50% growth rate compared to the overall industry, which had a growth rate of 14% from 2009 to 2016. Venture Capital investment in MLSC companies also reached \$2.1 billion from 2009 to 2017. MSLC companies had 3,460 innovative patents, and clinical trials totalled 453 by MSLC companies from 2009-2017. Due to the success of the original policy (2008-2018), the policy was extended for another 5-year period in June 2018.

The Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative is planned to be further evaluated, starting with a survey in 2022. The evaluation will consist of an implementation evaluation and an outcome evaluation. Previous evaluation of the program helped to track the outcomes and focus the activities more on regional specificities.

Cluster support instrument

In the Maritime Blue Strategy, an Innovation Accelerator is anchored that is meant to provide guidance, mentoring and access to funding for start-ups. The initiative will further launch a maritime cluster of maritime businesses, public entities, community organizations, research and training institutions that can proactively contribute to innovation and growth.

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Annex

Criterion of maturity assessment	Description	Scoring (points between 0 and 2)
Policy scope	assessment whether the country has a dedicated cluster policy, or cluster creation and/or development is targeted through broader policies, e.g. foreign trade policies, labour and social policies or specific sectoral policies, e.g. industrial policy tourism policies, agriculture policies	absence of cluster policy = 0 existence of broader policies = 0,5 existence of specific sectoral policies = 1 existence of targeted cluster policies = 2
Continuity of cluster policies	assessment of the duration and experience of the country in carrying out cluster policies. This criterion assesses only existence of targeted cluster policies and not broader policies or sectoral policies	absence of policies supporting cluster development = 0 cluster policy established recently (within the last 2 years) = 0,5 cluster policy established between over 2 and 10 years = 1 cluster policy established over 10 years ago = 2
Evidence of performance	assessment whether there are evaluations of past and ongoing policies and a monitoring system in place. The existence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms determines the degree of policy development in the country	no evaluation and / or monitoring available = 0 existence of evaluations of past policies, e.g. ex-ante = 0,5 existence of monitoring or an ongoing / interim evaluation =1 existence of monitoring and ex-ante or ongoing / interim evaluation =2
Cluster Support Instruments	assessment whether the policies provide any instruments to support the policy implementation, being these financial and/or technical support	no instruments for cluster development =0 financial support for cluster development in the broader and / or sectoral policy = 0,5 financial or technical support for cluster development in dedicated cluster policy = 1 financial and technical support for cluster development in dedicated cluster policy = 2

Source: ECCP (2022)