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ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Institutions of Higher Education CARES Act Funding Update

As you know, the Governor created an Economic Recovery Task Force to examine the impact and recovery needs across the spectrum of businesses and industries in the state and make any recommendations necessary to assist with the easing of COVID-19 mitigation measures and the restoration of the Arkansas Economy. As part of the Task Force's work, an Institutions of Higher Education Working Group was established. The Task Force and the Working Group have been meeting frequently to provide assistance and assist with efforts to move our State forward.

This Working Group assisted with a proposal to the CARES Act Steering Committee which recently approved funds for institutions of higher education. The approved funds are designed to assist institutions of higher education with costs associated with the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), contact tracing, and testing as institutions move to open campus' this Fall. It is not assumed that the approved funds will be adequate to meet projected needs for the entire academic year and the proposal was limited by the requirement, imposed by the CARES Act, that funds be expended by December 31, 2020.

Personal Protective Equipment: Dr. Markham and the Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Higher Education, have used a student/employee headcount model to apportion available PPE funds. Although the proposal was written for PPE based upon a Department of Finance and Administration approved list, Dr. Markham plans to take a proposal to the CARES Act Steering Committee to seek approval of items that campuses may want to purchase that are not on this list.

Contact Tracing: The Arkansas Department of Health is considering several options which include using the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) as a partner or another contractor. With limited funding, training will be needed for institutions interested in expanding contact tracing beyond the scope of what the allotted funds may cover.

Testing: Testing has been the most difficult aspect of this effort given the diversity of institutions comprising the higher education community in Arkansas and their geographic distribution. Institutions will need to choose a primary approach for testing and clearly delineate a backup testing plan if the primary approach proves to be not feasible. Although some institutions have laboratories with the appropriate CLIA certification to serve as a host for a testing instrument, there are significant challenges regarding the availability of instruments that can be procured for these purposes. As a result, there are several options that can be considered:

- If your institutional clinical laboratory is CLIA accredited and we are able to obtain a sufficient number of Abbott ID NOW testing instruments (or your campus obtains a testing instrument on its own), your campus simply needs to establish a backup plan.
- Contract with a local healthcare entity for priority access to testing capacity.

- Contract with a local private testing laboratory for priority testing capacity. The list below was provided by the Arkansas Department of Health:

Arkansas Children's	Little Rock	Dr. Bobby Boyanton, MD	248-633-4725	bboyanton@uams.edu
NW AR Pathology	Fayetteville	Dr. Lucas Campbell, MD	479-871-7723	lkc@nwapathology.com
Micro Diagnostics Lab	Benton	Mr. Lee Casterline (COO)	501-765-9191	Lcasterline.mdl@outlook.com
Pathology Services Lab	Russellville	Dr. Christina Jetton, MD	479-970-1761	cjetton@pathologyserviceslab.com

- Through a Memorandum of Agreement, engage an Arkansas Department of Health Local Health Unit (LHU). There is at least one ADH LHU in each of the state's 75 counties. ADH has a courier system that daily delivers samples to the ADH Public Health Laboratory in Little Rock for analysis.

The funds allotted to higher education included \$10.2 million for testing. Some of these funds will be allocated to ADH for the purchase of the PerkinElmer Instrument for COVID-19 testing. Since the funding proposal contemplated testing limited to symptomatic individuals, institutions will need to develop testing procedures for students and faculty/staff, some of whom may choose to be tested through their local health care provider.

Once a plan and backup plan is identified for each institution, the Economic Recovery Task Force's Higher Education Working Group will assist in developing criteria for the distribution of remaining testing funds. However, any campus is free to use its own funding to conduct additional testing if it chooses.

While there is still much work to do, the Arkansas Department of Health and the Arkansas Division of Higher Education continue to be excellent partners and will be able to assist institutions with options as we move forward.

Thank you for all that you continue to do for our State!

Respectfully,



Wes Ward
Secretary of Agriculture
State of Arkansas