

Act 1131 of 2015
Regional Workforce Planning Grant

APPLICATION COVER SHEET

DUE SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

To:	Arkansas Department of Higher Education	
Requesting Institution:	Arkansas State University-Newport	
Title of Project:	Northeast Arkansas Educating Agriculture Technology (EAT)	
Project Partners:	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="flex: 1; min-width: 200px;"> 1. Arkansas State University-Newport 2. Arkansas State University 3. Northeast Arkansas Career and Technical Center 4. Jackson County School District 5. Newport Special School District </div> <div style="flex: 1; min-width: 200px;"> 6. Harrisburg School District 7. Marked Tree School District 8. East Poinsett County School District 9. White River Planning & Development District, Inc. 10. Newport Economic Development Commission 11. Ritter Agribusiness 12. Holden Conner Partnerships 13. Rutledge & Rutledge Farms 14. Eagle Lake Farms 15. Generation Three Partnership Farms/ Young's Irrigation & Equipment LLC 16. D&M Farms 17. State Representative Michael John Gray 18. State Senator Ronald Caldwell. </div> </div>	
Requested Budget:	\$99,850.00	
Date Submitted:	August 31, 2015	
Applicant Contact:	Martha Shull, Ph.D.	
Applicant's Information:	7648 Victory Blvd. Newport, AR 72112 870-512-7841 martha_shull@asun.edu	

Authorized Signatures for Project Partners

If the institution has more than 10 partners, you may attach an additional page for signatures.

Arkansas State University-
Newport

Sandra Massey,
Ed.D, Chancellor



Lead Institution	Authorized Official		
Arkansas State University-Newport	Sandra Massey, Ed.D, Chancellor		Matt Wright Principal Marked Tree High School
Partner	Authorized Official Timothy N. Burcham, P.E. Ph.D. Dean, College of Agriculture and Technology	Partner Marked Tree School District	Authorized Official
			Michael John Gray State Representative District 47
Partner	Authorized Official Eddie Crain Northeast Arkansas Career & Technical Center	Partner	Authorized Official
			Ronald Caldwell State Senator District 23
Partner	Authorized Official John Davis Instructional Facilitator Harrisburg School District	Partner	Authorized Official
			Van Thomas Ex. Director White River PDD
Partner	Authorized Official Chester Shannon Superintendent Jackson County Schools	Partner	Authorized Official
			Jon Chadwell Executive Director Newport Economic Development Commission
Partner	Authorized Official John Kelly High School Principal East Poinsett County High School	Partner	Authorized Official
			Woody Ray Ritter Agribusiness
Partner	Authorized Official	Partner	Authorized Official
	Ryne Dubach Holden Conner Company		Tommy Young Generation Three Partnership Farms/ Young's Irrigation & Equipment LLC
Partner	Authorized Official	Partner	Authorized Official
	Kenny Falwell Eagle Lake Farms		Dennis Haigwood D&M Farms
Partner	Authorized Official	Partner	Authorized Official
	Jeff Rutledge Rutledge & Rutledge		Larry G. Bennett, PhD Superintendent of Schools

Act 1131 of 2015

Regional Workforce Planning Grant Application

*Please complete each section of this application and submit to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education by **September 1, 2015**. Applications should be emailed to ADHE.Workforce.Grant@adhe.edu. Please note that applications will not be accepted without a completed Intent Form, due August 1, 2015.*

SECTION 1 – PROGRAM NEED

30 Points

Proposals will include an overview of the labor needs, as determined by the Local Workforce Development Board, and specifically identify the skills gap employers face in the selected region and will continue to face in the future. Entities seeking grant funds must outline the proposed program and/or equipment needed and how creation of the program and/or acquisition of equipment will address those labor needs.

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Program Need (30 Pts)	Significantly addresses a top 3 workforce need in the region (26–30 Pts)	Addresses in a more limited way a top 3 workforce need in the region (21–25 Pts)	Addresses in a limited way a less critical workforce need in the region (16–20 Pts)	Identified labor need is too narrow or not in a critical area (0–15 Pts)

Please enter your answer in the box provided below. Feel free to include any necessary charts, graphs or tables.

Program Need

The Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agricultural Technology) initiative is intended to create long term relationships between agricultural based employers (e.g. producer/farmers, cooperatives, chemical companies, farm management services organizations), educational pathway providers (e.g. K-12, ASU-Newport (ASUN), and ASTATE College of Agriculture & Technology), the local workforce development board, and other partners to accomplish the following objectives:

- Clarify the workforce development need in the agriculture supply chain from agricultural producers, through farm management, agricultural chemical, cooperatives, etc.
- Create an understanding of the employment pathways and associated skills requirements
- Integrate educational pathways and align curriculum between K-12 schools in the region, ASUN, providing an articulation pathway to ASTATE College of Agriculture and Technology
- Create points of entry and exit in the educational pathway that allows students

to gain skills, exit to obtain a job, re-enter to gain additional skills in order to obtain a better job, achieving prospects for escalating a long term career path. The genesis for this concept was initiated by agricultural producers in the Jackson County area through an open forum discussion sponsored by ASUN. After exploring skills needs and career possibilities along possible career paths, employment prospects for selected occupational codes were explored to determine if the forecasted demand for occupations in the agriculture sectors adequately represented the stated demand. The scope was broadened to include other counties in ASUN's service area. Preliminary conclusions indicate that demand in many areas of agricultural occupational codes provide demand levels significant enough to examine further. In addition to demand numbers, technological advancements have added significant complexity to skills requirements for agricultural workers, whether operating very expensive agricultural equipment or programming cutting edge equipment to operate automatically. As one producer so eloquently stated, "It's not your grandpa's tractor, anymore." The website discoverarkansas.net provides information as to projections in occupational codes, based on gathering of data from a variety of sources. A sampling of related occupational codes are as follows:

Occupation	2012	2022	Change	An Change	% Change	Growth %
Farmers, Ranchers & Other Ag. Managers (In Demand)	5,022	5,713	691	69	13.8	1.3
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	1,272	1,386	114	11	9	0.9
Agricultural Workers	1,202	1,310	108	11	9	0.9
Grounds Maintenance Workers	714	784	70	7	9.8	0.9
Landscaping and Grounds keeping Workers (In Demand)	637	700	63	6	9.9	0.9
Animal Care and Service Workers	148	170	22	2	14.9	1.4
Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders (In Demand)	81	103	22	2	27.2	2.4
Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians (In Demand)	111	130	19	2	17.1	1.6
Agricultural and Food Science Technicians (In Demand)	53	66	13	1	24.5	2.2
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers (In Demand)	43	55	12	1	27.9	2.5
Ag. Equipment Operators (In Demand)	162	174	12	1	7.4	0.7
Animal Trainers (In Demand)	71	81	10	1	14.1	1.3
Farm and Home Management Advisors	41	46	5	1	12.2	1.2

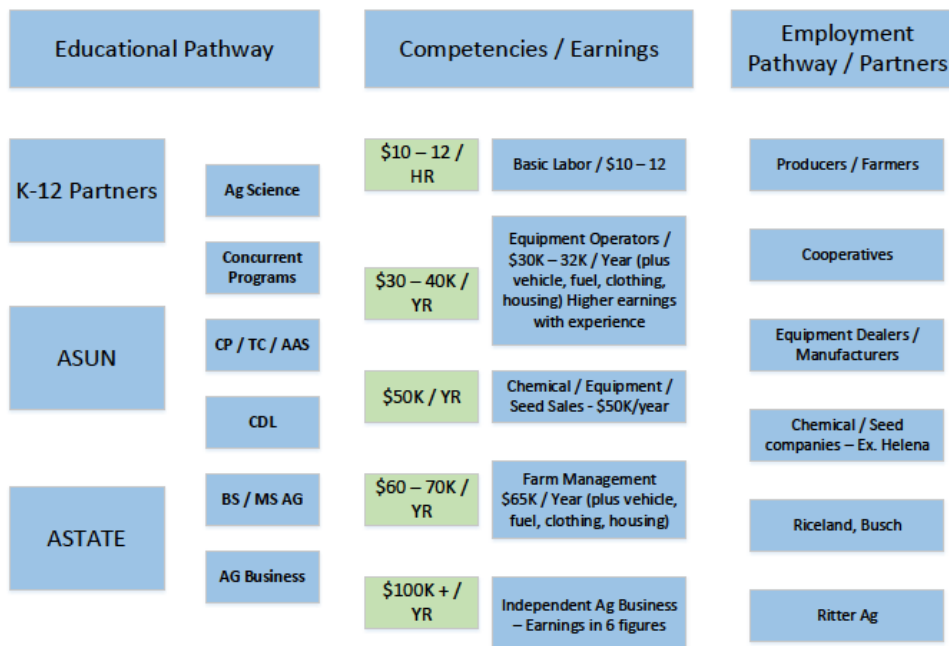
During our initial exploratory planning sessions, it was pointed out by agricultural producers that there is not a local source for skills development capacity in advancing technologies required to operate equipment. This gap recognized by local farmers depicts a need for a local supporting curriculum at a 2-year school (ASUN) to fill the void between what is offered at the K-12 level and that of ASTATE College of Agriculture & Technology. It has been publicly stated by many elected officials at the local level, in the legislature, and even the governor, that agriculture is the largest economic sector in the state of Arkansas. This has been confirmed by local economic developers, as well as the North Central Workforce Development Board housed with the White River Planning and Development District.

The initial planning partners concluded that there is more than sufficient evidence to explore this need further, and utilize the planning phase of this Regional Workforce

Development grant opportunity to gather partners, explore the skills and technology gaps, add partners as appropriate, and develop clarity of understanding as to the depth of need and plan a comprehensive set of solutions to address the issues. Integrating pathways for education, skills and competencies, career, earnings, and employment partners will be a key focus of the planning phase. The following graphic was derived during the initial exploratory planning session and indicates the concept for integrating these pathways in order to create a comprehensive system to accomplish the following:

- Providing students at all levels of a career pathway a vision of career potential
- Define entrance and exit points along the educational continuum that allows continuous skills development and career enhancement
- Building an adequate and qualified agricultural workforce pipeline
- Establish partnerships at key levels of the agricultural supply chains

Agriculture Educational / Skills / Earnings Pathways



SECTION 2 – PROGRAM PLAN**25 Points**

Program plans must be designed to meet the goals and core requirements of the Regional Workforce Grants program. At a minimum, the plan must include a summary of expected outcomes, a description of career pathways that will be created or enhanced, a description of any anticipated equipment needs and a proposed governance and accountability structure for the program.

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Program Plan (25 Pts)	Plan addresses all goals and core requirements and identifies significant outcomes (22–25 Pts)	Plan addresses most goals and requirements and identifies outcomes (18–21 Pts)	Plan addresses many goals and requirements and identifies few outcomes (14–17 Pts)	Plan lacks significant requirements or lacks apparent outcomes (0–13 Pts)

Please enter your answer in the box provided below. Feel free to include any necessary charts, graphs or tables.

Program Plan**Planning Grant Outcomes**

The following outcomes were identified for the Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology) planning grant:

1. *Clarify the Workforce Development need in the agriculture supply chain from agricultural producers through all agricultural related industries (i.e. agricultural chemical, cooperatives, seed production, and agriculture equipment sales and maintenance).* This is a very real outcome based proposal because, at this time, the actual need is not fully understood.

a. *Emerging Technology.* Modern agriculture is becoming increasingly more efficient through automation. Tractors have automatic steering systems that use the satellite Global Positioning System (GPS) and on-board Geographic Information Systems (GIS), irrigation systems are automated and remotely monitored, and harvesting equipment collects moisture, volume, and location data in the field. This technology has arrived in less than a generation and our local producers do not have the skills to operate, maintain, and effectively use the equipment that is required to be competitive in today's agriculture economy.

b. *Government Regulations.* Today's producers are being held accountable for their impact on the environment. Agriculture has become dependent on chemical technology for pest control, weed eradication, and increased crop yields. Not only is the use of chemicals a very

sophisticated process, but state, federal, and now foreign trading partners are requiring monitoring and evidence of safe practice. Modern producers understand they are stewards of the environment and are becoming dependent on technology to ensure safe application of the chemicals required to remain the most productive food producing culture in the world.

c. Genetically Manufactured Organisms (GMO). Modern agriculture uses GMOs to efficiently meet the growing demand for food. Genetically engineered poultry produce more eggs with fewer resources expended and genetically engineered seeds grow crops that produce more and are pest and weed resilient. Modern producers must possess knowledge of GMO s to be ethical and efficient stewards.

Northeast Arkansas EAT will use the Planning Grant to identify emerging technology and associated skills to meet the need of modern food production. We will locate and explore best practices throughout the region and hire a Technology Futurist to ensure we are designing programs that meet current and future requirements.

2. Integrate educational pathways and align curriculum between K-12 schools in the region, ASUN, while providing articulation pathways to Arkansas State University (ASTATE) College of Agriculture and Technology.

a. No Community Colleges in this workforce region have an active Agriculture Education program. ASUN has the resources and commitment necessary to fill this gap. Based on our initial meetings with producers, employers, and ASTATE; ASUN has programs of study that can contribute to the development of the training need. Our Renewable Energy, Commercial Driver Training, Diesel Technology, Computer Networking and Business programs have resources and curriculum that may be explored during the Planning Phase of this grant application. ASUN is currently participating in research through the National Science Foundation to explore technology requirements for Precision Agriculture.

b. There are High Schools in this workforce region that do not have the resources to independently develop a modern agriculture program but are not in the service area of a Career and Technical Center.

i. Newport Special School District has a regionally award winning agriculture department but recognizes their curriculum does not meet the current technology need of local producers. This school district is not supported by a Career and Technical Center. Newport High School will begin a pilot Precision

Agriculture Program for Academic Year 2016 and is seeking a concurrent education partner. Newport High School is less than 3 miles from the ASUN Newport campus and has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

ii. *Jackson County School District* has a strong career and technical focus but does not have a modern Agriculture Program. Tuckerman High School is less than five miles from the ASUN Newport campus and has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

iii. *Marked Tree School District* is within the Northeast Arkansas Delta farming district. This school district is also not supported by a Career and Technical Center and the Marked Tree High School is less than two miles from the ASUN Marked Tree Campus. Marked Tree School District has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

iv. *East Poinsett County (EPC) School District* is within the Northeast Arkansas Delta farming district. This school district is not supported by a Career and Technical Center and the EPC High School is less than ten miles from the ASUN Marked Tree Campus. The EPC School District has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

v. *Harrisburg School District* includes the consolidated Wiener School District and has been exploring pathways to providing Agriculture Education for several years. Harrisburg School District currently partners with ASUN and the Northeast Arkansas Career and Technical Center to provide career and technical training opportunities for their students. Harrisburg School District is centrally located to the ASUN system and their High School is within 20 miles of each of the ASUN campuses: Newport, Marked Tree, and Jonesboro. The Harrisburg School District has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

vi. *The Northeast Arkansas Career and Technical Center (NEACTC)* is located in Jonesboro, Arkansas and provides career and technical education for twelve regional high schools. The NEACTC currently collaborates with ASUN to provide concurrent enrollment for over 500 high school students each year. The NEACTC is one of only two high school programs in Arkansas that have implemented an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)

program of study. There is great potential for the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for agriculture applications. UAVs may be used for crop scouting, irrigation monitoring, and chemical application. The NEACTC has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

c. Arkansas State University (ATATE) offers Baccalaureate Degree Programs within the College of Agriculture and Technology. Dr. Timothy Burcham has participated in preliminary discussions with local producers and ASUN and has broad experience developing agricultural curriculum. ASTATE has submitted a letter of commitment to be included in the Northeast Arkansas EAT Planning Grant.

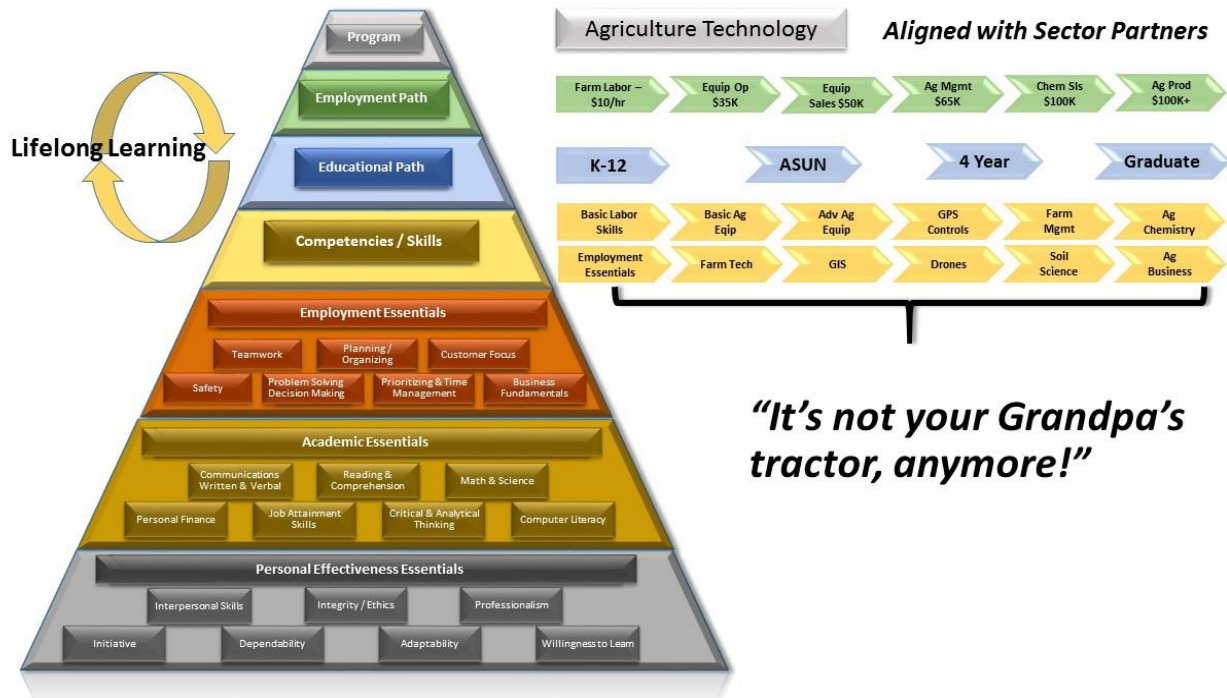
Career Pathways that will be Created or Enhanced

A goal of the Northeast Arkansas EAT is to enhance or create career pathways for the occupations in the Major Industry Sector that includes Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting as described by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The latest Occupational Employment Statistics for Arkansas were posted as of May 201 and predict growth in each of the occupation titles within the sector. Through this collaborative partnership resources will be shared in response to this regional workforce need. This will provide a more efficient, consistent, and rapid response to employer demands.

During the time allocated with the Planning Grant, Northeast Arkansas will explore the following:

1. Precision Agriculture: This will include current and future technology that utilizes GPS and GIS technology to improve efficiency and environmental stewardship.
2. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles: UAV is an emerging technology and it's use in agriculture applications is exciting.
3. Soil and Crop Science: Current practices will require understanding of the development and use of GMOs.
4. Hydrology: Water is one of our most important natural resources. The supply of water for agriculture use is limited by nature and there is increasing evidence that chemical wastes (including agriculture chemicals) are affecting our water supplies.
5. Modern Agriculture Equipment: Northeast Arkansas EAT will explore the training needs associated with the emerging technology used in today's equipment. The use of simulators and partnerships with Agriculture Equipment manufacturers to ensure cost efficient training opportunities will be evaluated.

As stated in our outcomes plan, technology is developing so quickly that many of the career pathways needed have not been clearly identified. Our plan will use the strong partnerships that we have created to create points of entry and exit in the educational pathway that allow students to gain skills, exit to obtain jobs, re-enter to gain additional skills in order to obtain better employment and prospects for escalating a long term career pathway.



Anticipated Equipment Needs:

Because this is a planning grant, our anticipated equipment needs are limited to the items described in the Materials and Supplies budget narrative: A laptop computer, portable printer, and a portable multimedia projector for the facilitator

Proposed Governance and Accountability Structure:

As the lead institution for the Northeast Arkansas EAT collaboration, Arkansas State University--Newport will manage the grant and be responsible for fiscal and administrative processes. Arkansas State University--Newport has proven capacity to successfully administer state and federal grants. In just the past five years, ASUN has successfully managed 84 grants that include funds in excess of \$11,260,000.00. ASUN's compliance with state and federal regulations has been maintained and financial capacity to administer grants is well established. ASUN has a full-time grants administrator to provide experienced grant management and oversight. In 2014, ASUN contracted with eCIVIS to provide a very robust grants management package that tracks expenditures, provides communication pathways for grant partners, and tracks stated grant outcomes. Northeast Arkansas EAT fiscal, programmatic, and reporting processes will be implemented through memoranda of understanding between Arkansas State University and the collaboration partners. Each partner will have equal representation and an equal voice in the administrative decisions to be made by the collaboration. All reporting processes will be in compliance with state procurement regulations and Workforce Initiative Act grant requirements. Planning meeting and regional employer meeting outcomes will be documented and kept on file as support documentation to inform the development of the project. An Northeast Arkansas EAT Board will be developed and include representation from industry partners, regional producers, and from K-12 partners. Voting members will be determined during early planning sessions with collaboration partners. All partners will

have a voice but voting will be restricted to designees as described.

SECTION 3 – STRENGTH OF PARTNERSHIP**25 Points**

Proposals are required to address how the program plan incorporates each of the mandatory partners, as identified above, and other regional partners who can contribute significantly, in a unique and meaningful role. Describe the anticipated role for each member of the alliance. **Include with the proposal a commitment letter from each partner and the Local Workforce Development Board.**

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Strength of Partnership (25 Pts)	Plan includes broad representation and each partner has a defined role with identified critical contributions (22–25 Pts)	Plan includes broad representation but partner roles are not clearly defined (18–21 Pts)	Plan lacks one or two important partners or not all partners are critical to success of the plan (14–17 Pts)	Partner participation is too narrow or some partners do not contribute meaningfully (0–13 Pts)

Please enter your answer in the box provided below. Feel free to include any necessary charts, graphs or tables.

Section 3—STRENGTH OF PARTNERSHIP

Proposals are required to address how the program plan incorporates each of the mandatory partners, and other regional partners who can contribute significantly, in a unique and meaningful role. Describe the anticipated role for each member of the alliance. Include with the proposal a commitment letter from each partner and the Local Workforce Development Board.

Agriculture remains the economic underpinning of the Northeast Arkansas-Delta region. The industry of agribusiness has within the past two decades undergone enormous technological changes, yet education providers have not kept pace with these changes nor have they revised their curriculum to meet the changing demands and needs of the agribusiness community. As one of our junior farming partners said, “Modern tractors practically need the same skills as NASA.” To that, the senior partner added, “And mules are just a memory.”

This grant addresses filling this important gap through a strong alignment of partners. ASUN has assembled a team of dedicated individuals who bring years of knowledge and expertise to the table and comprise the **partners in this alliance** for this initiative and pledge their support:

- ASUN’s own administrative team: Chancellor, Dr. Sandra Massey; Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Martha S. Shull; Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Economic Development, Charles Appleby; and Dean of Applied Sciences, Robert Summers. These four alone account for more than 150 years of combined leadership, management, and administrative experience.
- Arkansas State University (A-State), College of Agriculture and Technology, headed by Dr. Timothy Burcham;
- Arkansas State Senator, Ronald Caldwell, and Arkansas State Representative, Michael John Gray, legislators from the Northeast Arkansas-Delta region which

these schools serve; both legislators are active farmers in personal support of this partnership.

- Northeast Arkansas Career and Technical Center;
- Five K-12 CTE/ school district partners;
- The White River Planning and Development District, Inc., the Newport Economic Development Commission, and Ritter Agribusiness;
- Five agribusiness farming partners.

The agricultural sector that comprises Northeast Arkansas EAT includes five prominent, local farming families whose holdings represent more than 150,000 acres of Northeast Arkansas-Delta farm land currently under crops. These partner farmers all come from multi-generation farm-owning families, one going back to the establishment of the state of Arkansas. The land and farming are in their blood. **Their commitment to keeping Arkansas a major agricultural producing state and keeping the brightest and the best of our children in Arkansas is sincere and unwavering.** Our partners all believe that to build a stronger, better Arkansas tomorrow, we need to retain our youth. To do this, we must offer them an opportunity to a better life and gainful employment. The letters of commitment are appended at the end of this proposal.

This partnership envisions a pathway to meet the needs of our agricultural community. Agriculture is the heart of our area's economic development. The commitment to strengthening and supporting the agricultural sector is evidenced in the letters from our legislators. This coalition is erected on **three building blocks** to provide a strong educational agriculture technology program that will, in turn, provide credentialed workers who meet the needs of all the members of this alliance:

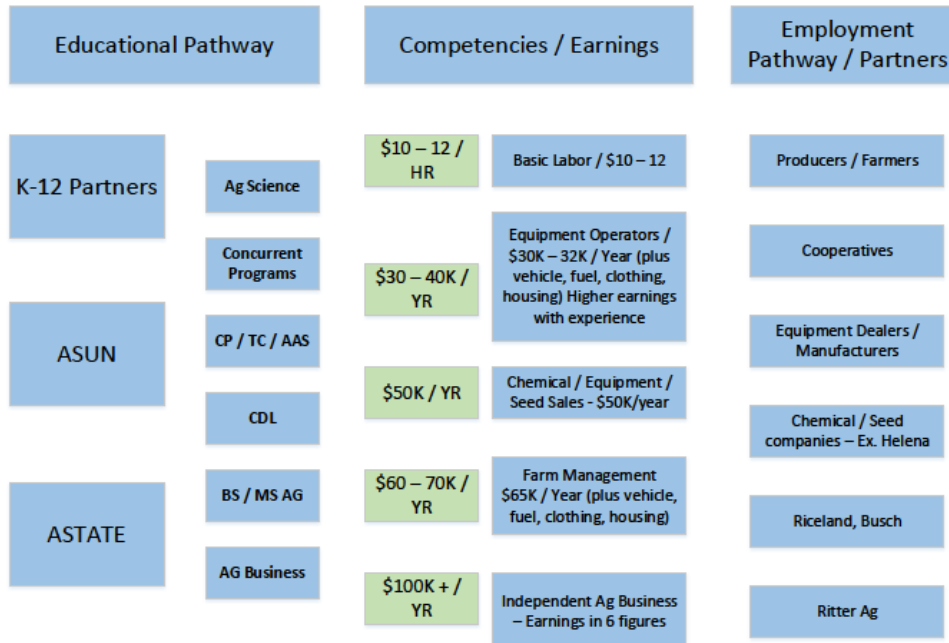
- Partners who help with determining the real world need;
 - Partners who will close the partner-identified skills gaps;
 - Partners who will be the employers of this product: credentialed completers.
- These are the youth of the Northeast-Delta who will remain in Arkansas by virtue of increased agricultural productivity and a revitalized, thriving Delta.

Representatives from the Workforce Development Boards, the Economic Development Boards, and the agribusiness community have already come together to identify and clearly define the gaps. They have already presented real world needs and have met with ASUN to discuss best practices needed to formulate the parameters of this project. The first goal of this coalition was to obtain a clear understanding of the gaps in education and training to meet the needs of today's agricultural world and to identify the entire supply chain as it pertains to our region. These members are committed to continue to serve as an advisory board throughout the entire project.

ASUN will be the training collaborator and interface for the K-12 partners, A-State College of Agriculture and Technology; and the workforce and agribusiness community alliance. ASUN will integrate the partners into an **educational pathway continuum** that moves students from K-12 through employment. ASUN and all our partners will work together to develop and implement the EAT strategy and curriculum. This continuum will allow students to enter and exit to employment and then to re-enter

to further advance their careers.

Agriculture Educational / Skills / Earnings Pathways



Core elements will begin with an assessment of existing skills and skill gaps. These will be addressed through basic skills instruction, student support, and will have ultimately a certification based on best practices. **ASUN will, in conjunction with the Workforce Development Board and the Agribusiness Advisory Board**, develop an agricultural workforce readiness program. **ASUN will also work with A-State's College of Agriculture and Technology** to provide a seamless pathway for a four year degree if students wish to pursue that option rather than going immediately into the workplace.

ASUN presently is engaged in a robust, vibrant **concurrent program partnerships with the K-12 schools in their service area**. These collaborations have been integral to the ASUN-K-12 concurrent career pathway model since 2002. ASUN has served more than 5000 enrollments in little more than a decade and anticipates a record-breaking 1000 enrollments for Fall Term 2105. ASUN believes that this shows how well we work with our K-12 partners to help their students succeed.

The secondary technical center and concurrent enrollment programs with the five high schools in our area that have not career and technical centers are the means by which high school CTE students participate in college technical programs as the entry point to earning Certificates of Proficiency, Technical Certificates, and often the Associate of Applied Sciences. Those high school students who will participate in this program will earn concurrent college credits that will position them to scale the stackable credentials

pathway that will ultimately lead to good jobs working or to continue in the agribusiness field at a four year university. At every level, the agribusiness partners will be integrated into the program so that ASUN can provide earning outcomes for both the students and the region.

The EAT career pathway model includes a pipeline for high school students to enter into college technical programs through either a secondary technical center such as the **Northeast Arkansas Career and Technical Center** or from the concurrent CTE programs at the **five participating high schools**. These schools will engage with ASUN in this initiative in several ways:

- Student Participation in concurrent college credit opportunities, including a career pathway that leads either to further education at both the two year and four year level or to gainful employment in the agricultural field.
- Collaboration with ASUN faculty and staff in student recruitment, activities, and promotions of targeted pathways such as classroom presentations, parent nights, Future Farmers of America activities, college/program tours, and New Student Orientations.
- Collaboration with Career Coach Program and activities.
- Participation in ASUN's one credit hour College and Life Skills class to help students learn college and real world survival skills.
- Access to students regarding admission/enrollment, financial aid, assessment measures, and other college-related processes to prepare these students for success.
- Collaboration with Career Pathways to assist in providing their clients with opportunities in the agricultural technological fields.
- Collaboration with workforce and agribusiness partners to assure CTE programs and employment relevance.
- Participation on planning discussion.

The workforce and agribusiness employer level of engagement will vary based on capacity and time involved as indicated by their letters of commitment; future employer partners will assume significant roles:

- Hiring of qualified credentialed graduates
- Preferential hiring consideration of qualified credential graduates
- Interviews with graduates and new completers
- Mentoring
- Work-based experiences; e.g. job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, etc.
- Subject matter expertise; such as, guest speakers in classes, event judges, skills requirements, and /or feedback regarding program content and direction; assessment, and credentials
- Workplace tours
- Participating in job and career fairs
- Provision of program resources: career based materials, shop/lab supplies, equipment, instructors, and/or other donations
- Participation in planning discussions.

The attached letters of support provide evidence of the strength of commitment pledged by the Northeast Arkansas EAT alliance.

SECTION 4 – BUDGET PLAN**20 Points**

Proposals will include a detailed financial plan assigning cost estimates to all proposed planning activities and a completed budget template. Efficiency in planning grant expenditures is expected.

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Budget Plan (20 Pts)	All requested resources are essential and clearly support the goals of the plan. (18–20 Pts)	Most requested resources are important and clearly support the goals of the plan (15–17 Pts)	Plan includes some questionable resource requests (11–14 Pts)	Budget includes requests deemed unnecessary (0–10 Pts)

Section 4.1 – Budget Plan Detail

Please provide your detailed financial plan in the box below.

Section 4 Budget Plan**A. Partner Participant Support Costs:**

1. The largest expense of the budget for this planning phase of the grant for Northeast Arkansas EAT is in the category of Personnel. \$59,850.00 has been budgeted in this category to allow for the collaboration to hire a grant facilitator. This amount includes a salary of \$45,000 with fringe benefits calculated at 33% (\$14,850). The facilitator will work with the area partners in throughout the planning phase of the grant with the goal to become the “subject matter expert” for the project. If the Planning Grant is successful, the facilitator will become the Project Coordinator during the Implementation Phase for continuity.
2. Travel has been budgeted at \$13,000. Of this amount, \$4,000 will allow for travel by the facilitator to meet with the grant partners, cover fuel costs for partners to attend coordination meetings, and will allow for attendance at the Workforce Development Board Meetings for the Northeast Arkansas area. The remaining \$9,000 will be designated for travel to review/research best practices. This budget will include all costs for travel (carrier, food, and lodging)
3. In the Other Expense Category for Partner Participant costs, \$5,000 has been budgeted to offset the administrative expenses by ASUN serving as the lead institution.

B. Other Direct Costs:

1. Materials and Supplies will include the cost of a laptop, portable printer, and a portable multimedia projector, as well as other necessary office supplies, to allow the facilitator to

travel to our partner's facilities and be able to work on the planning process while away from the office. The supplies will also be utilized during meetings with all partners in the preparation of the next phase of the grant.

2. Publication Costs/Documentation/Dissemination is budgeted at \$5,000. This will allow for the development of publications for the partners to utilize in promoting the activities of the collaboration. This line item will include postage, as well as any costs incurred with advertising in media outlets, and any documents that are prepared and utilized by our K-12 and industry partners. This amount will also include design/publication costs for the final Implementation Plan.
3. The Consultant Services category has a budget of \$10,000 to hire one or more "Technology Futurists" to help define future technology needs and help discover current technology applications that might be used in Agriculture.
4. There has been \$2,000 allocated in the Other category to allow for light refreshments to be available for partner meetings which can help encourage attendance.

Section 4.2 – Budget Plan Template

Please complete the budget template below. Totals will calculate automatically based on your input.

A. Partner Participant Support Costs

1. Personnel/Stipend	\$59,850.00
2. Travel	\$13,000.00
3. Other (Explain Below)	\$5,000.00
Briefly Explain Other Costs	
TOTAL PARTNER PARTICIPANT COSTS	\$77,850.00

B. Other Direct Costs

1. Materials and Supplies	\$5000.00
2. Publication Costs/Documentation/Dissemination	\$5,000.00
3. Consultant Services	\$10,000.00
4. Other (Explain Below)	\$2,000.00
Briefly Explain Other Costs	
TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS	\$22,000.00

C. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS

	\$99,850.00
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SUBMIT BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2015Email to ADHE.Workforce.Grant@adhe.edu*Applications that are received without an Intent Form (Due August 1) will not be accepted.***PLANNING GRANT SCORING RUBRIC**

Critical Elements	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement	Value
Program Need	Significantly addresses a top 3 workforce need in the region (26–30)	Addresses in a more limited way a top 3 workforce need in the region (21–25)	Addresses in a limited way a less critical workforce need in the region (16–20)	Identified labor need is too narrow or not in a critical area (0–15)	30 Pts
Program Plan	Plan addresses all goals and core requirements and identifies significant outcomes (22–25)	Plan addresses most goals and requirements and identifies outcomes (18–21)	Plan addresses many goals and requirements and identifies few outcomes (14–17)	Plan lacks significant requirements or lacks apparent outcomes (0–13)	25 Pts
Strength of Partnership	Plan includes broad representation and each partner has a defined role with identified critical contributions (22–25)	Plan includes broad representation but partner roles are not clearly defined (18–21)	Plan lacks one or two important partners or not all partners are critical to success of the plan (14–17)	Partner participation is too narrow or some partners do not contribute meaningfully (0–13)	25 Pts
Budget Plan	All requested resources are essential and clearly support the goals of the plan. (18–20)	Most requested resources are important and clearly support the goals of the plan (15–17)	Plan includes some questionable resource requests (11–14)	Budget includes requests deemed unnecessary (0–10)	20 Pts
Total Points Possible					100 Pts



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY
P.O. Box 1080, State University, AR 72467 | o: 870-972-2087 | f: 870-972-3885

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

This letter of commitment assures that Arkansas State University (ASTATE) will serve as an active partner with the Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN), and will actively collaborate with ASUN and other partners in our area in a regional workforce alliance to support the Workforce Initiative Act grant program. We believe that college and career planning, student support, and involvement from agriculture, as well as business and industry are necessary to encourage youth and help them make appropriate decisions regarding an education and career pathway plan.

We commit to continue active participation in the planning phase of this grant through attending planning meetings, partnering with the various partners in exploring educational and career pathways to ensure alignment of curriculum with the agricultural sector.

Sincerely,

Timothy N. Burcham, P.E., Ph.D.
Dean, College of Agriculture and Technology
P.O. Box 1080
State University, AR 72467
(870) 972-2802
FAX (870) 972-3885

cc: Dr. Lynita Cooksey
Dr. Sandra Massey
Dr. Charley Appleby
Shawnie Carrier

Northeast Arkansas

Career & Tech Center

1727 South Main Street ✕ Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401 ✕ 870.933.5891 ✕ neactc.com

August 10, 2015


Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

This letter of commitment assures that as a K-12 CTE partner with the Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN), we will actively collaborate with ASUN and other partners in our area in a regional workforce alliance to support the Workforce Initiative Act grant program. We believe that college and career planning, student supports, and involvement from business and industry are necessary to encourage youth and help them make appropriate decisions regarding an education and career pathway plan.

Our role as a K-12 CTE partner will include, but is not limited to, the items checked below:

- ☐ Student participation in concurrent and/or articulated college credit opportunities, including career pathway programs available through secondary technical centers located on ADTEC college campuses
- ☐ Collaboration with college faculty and staff in student recruitment activities and promotion of targeted pathways such as classroom presentations, parent nights, college campus/program tours, and registration events.
- ☐ Student participation in college-sponsored events such as college and career fairs
- ☐ Collaboration with the Career Coach program and activities
- ☐ Providing access to students regarding admission/enrollment, financial aid, assessment, and other college-related processes.
- ☐ Collaboration with business and industry to assure CTE program and employment relevancy
- ☐ Participation in planning discussions

K-12 Education Partner (School Name)	School District	County
Northeast Arkansas Career & Technical Center	Jonesboro Public Schools	Craighead
Contact Name	Title	Date
Eddie Crain	Director	8/10/2015
Signature: 		

"Your CAREER awaits"



Harrisburg School District

Danny B. Sample, Superintendent

207 W. Estes St, Harrisburg, AR 72432

(870) 578-2416

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Todd Bartholomew, President

Fonda Eaton, Vice President

Greg Reddmann, Secretary

Frankie Lindsey

Jeb Bass

August 10, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee

Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education

423 Main Street, Suite 400

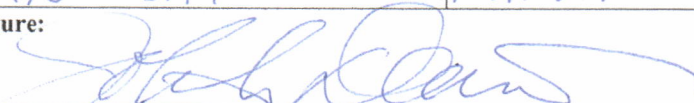
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

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- ☒ Student participation in concurrent and/or articulated college credit opportunities, including career pathway programs available through secondary technical centers located on ADTEC college campuses
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- ☒ Collaboration with the Career Coach program and activities
- ☒ Providing access to students regarding admission/enrollment, financial aid, assessment, and other college-related processes.
- ☒ Collaboration with business and industry to assure CTE program and employment relevancy
- ☒ Participation in planning discussions

K-12 Education Partner (School Name)	School District	County
HARRISBURG HIGH SCHOOL	HARRISBURG S.D.	POPINSETT
Contact Name	Title	Date
JOHN DAVIS	INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITATOR	8-19-15
Signature: 		

Sincerely,



Danny B. Sample

Superintendent

Harrisburg School District

Jackson County School District

Member of North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Chester Shannon, Superintendent
(870) 349-2232 • (870) 349-2355 Fax

PRINCIPALS

Michael Holland, Tuckerman High School
Kristy Metzger, Swifton Middle School
Pharis Smith, Tuckerman Elementary

DISTRICT TREASURER

Cathy Platt

P.O. Box 1070

Tuckerman, Arkansas 72473

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ada Person
Randy Wagner
Dennis Neal
Sandra Provence
Phil Zuber
Brian King
Wroten Koller

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

This letter of commitment is written in support of Arkansas State University-Newport's (ASUN) Initiative: Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology). I urge you to give serious consideration to their proposal which addresses the very real need to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

The Jackson County School District has strong career and technical education programs and has been a very successful partner with Arkansas State University-Newport. We will continue to collaborate with ASUN throughout the planning process and hope to create or enhance programs that will meet this critical skills gap.

I urge you to support this project.

Sincerely,



Mr. Chester Shannon
Superintendent
Jackson County Schools

CS/ps

**EAST POINSETT COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**502 McClellan
Lepanto, Arkansas 72354
870-475-2331 Fax-870-475-2206**



HOME OF THE WARRIORS



8/30/2015

East Poinsett County High School
502 McClellan Street
Lepanto, AR 72354

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee

Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education

423 Main Street, Suite 400

Little Rock, AR 72201

Planning Grant Committee:

Re: WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 PLANNING GRANT

This letter of commitment is written in support of Arkansas State University-Newport's (ASUN) initiative: Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology). I urge you to give serious consideration to their proposal which addresses the very real need to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

The East Poinsett County School District has a successful history of collaboration with ASU-Newport and will support this planning process. Agriculture and Agriculture related industries are very important to our community and our school is committed to helping enhance or create programs to meet this skill gap.

Our administrative database management system, Kuder, with results totaled from 1,625 career assessments lists agriculture, food, and natural resources as the third highest career interest of students at East Poinsett County. Currently 88 students out of 216 9th through 12th grade students, 41%, are enrolled in agriculture career technical education courses offered. Our students need to be able to further their public school career tech education at area Arkansas State University-Newport campuses. Please accept this letter of commitment with the understanding that we are continually seeking additional opportunities for our students and our region from ASU-N, with Northeast Arkansas E.A.T. fulfilling a need that both need fulfilled.

Best Regards

John Kelly
High School Principal
East Poinsett County High School



"INDIANS"

Marked Tree High School

406 St. Francis
Marked Tree, Arkansas 72365
Fax # 870-358-3953

Superintendent
Annesa Thompson
(870) 358-2913

Principal
Matt Wright
(870) 358-2891

August 26, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 PLANNING GRANT

This letter of commitment is written in support of Arkansas State University-Newport's (ASUN) initiative: Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology). I urge you to give serious consideration to their proposal which addresses the very real need to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

Marked Tree High School has a successful history of collaboration with ASU-Newport and will support this planning process. Agriculture and Agriculture related industries are very important to our community and our school is committed to helping enhance or create programs to meet this skill gap.

Sincerely,

Matt Wright, Principal
Marked Tree High School



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 PLANNING GRANT

This letter of commitment is written in support of Arkansas State University-Newport's (ASUN) initiative: Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology). I urge you to give serious consideration to their proposal which addresses the very real need to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

I am personally committed to supporting any project that will address these skill gaps by a successful collaboration among K-12 schools, workforce agencies, industry and agricultural employers, and higher education. ASUN will actively collaborate with all these partners in our area to form a vibrant, robust regional workforce-agribusiness alliance to support the Workforce Initiative Act grant program. They have already participated in preliminary discussions and agree that the targeted pathway in agriculture will support critical workforce needs in Northeastern Arkansas and create a pool of potential employees from the credentialed graduates who, in turn, will revitalize the Delta.

I urge you to support this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael John Gray".

Michael John Gray
State Representative
District 47

REPRESENTATIVE

Michael John Gray
P. O. Box 360
Augusta, Arkansas 72006-0360

870-347-6000 Business
michael.gray@arkansashouse.org

DISTRICT 47

Counties:

Part Jackson
Part Independence
Part White
Woodruff

COMMITTEES:

Education
Higher Education Subcommittee

City, County and Local Affairs
Local Government Personnel
Subcommittee

Vice Chairperson,
Joint Committee on Advanced
Communications and Information
Technology

RONALD CALDWELL

SENATOR
23RD DISTRICT
OFFICE: 870-238-5421
ronald.caldwell@senate.ar.gov

120 CR 393
WYNNE, ARKANSAS 72396



THE SENATE
STATE OF ARKANSAS

CHAIR:
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VICE-CHAIR:
RULES, RESOLUTIONS & MEMORIALS

MEMBER:
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
JOINT ENERGY
JOINT BUDGET
TRANSPORTATION, TECHNOLOGY & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

August 27, 2015

Arkansas Department of Higher Education
ATTN: Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Grant Review Committee:

Please accept this letter on behalf of Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN) as it applies for a Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Planning Grant to support its Northeast Arkansas Educating Agriculture Technology (EAT) initiative. This initiative is designed to educate area agricultural workers about the latest industry technologies and prepare them to be successful employees.

ASUN will partner with area schools, workforce agencies and employers to equip workers with the skills needed to meet agricultural industry needs in northeast Arkansas. This project has my full support, and I would ask those with the power to do so to give ASUN's proposal every possible consideration.

Thank you for your time and attention in this matter. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ronald Caldwell".

Ronald Caldwell
State Senator
District 23

RC:lag

RONALD CALDWELL

SENATOR
23RD DISTRICT
OFFICE: 870-238-5421
ronald.caldwell@senate.ar.gov

120 CR 393
WYNNE, ARKANSAS 72396



THE SENATE
STATE OF ARKANSAS

CHAIR:
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VICE-CHAIR:
RULES, RESOLUTIONS & MEMORIALS

MEMBER:
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
JOINT ENERGY
JOINT BUDGET
TRANSPORTATION, TECHNOLOGY & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

August 27, 2015

Mr. Robert P. Summers
Dean of Applied Science
7648 Victory Boulevard
Newport, Arkansas 72112

Dear Mr. Summers:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a letter on behalf of Arkansas State University-Newport as it applies to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education for a Workforce Initiative Act Planning Grant. I have enclosed the letter for inclusion in your application packet.

Best wishes in all your endeavors. If I can be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ronald Caldwell".

Ronald Caldwell
State Senator
District 23

RC:lag

ENCLOSURE

Holden Conner Company
2301 McLain Street
Newport, AR 72112
Office: 870-523-6576
Fax: 870-523-8765

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

Dear Members of the Workforce Initiative Act Review Committee:

This letter of commitment assures that as an agribusiness partner with Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN) in their initiative, Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology), we will actively collaborate with the college and other partners in our area in a regional workforce alliance to support this Workforce Initiative Act grant program. We have already participated in preliminary discussions, serve as advisors to this initiative, and agree that the targeted pathway in agricultural technology will support critical workforce needs in Northeastern Arkansas-Delta and create a pool of potential employees from the credentialed graduates.

In the agriculture industry, we are struggling to fill our labor needs from the current pool of available workers. With the trend toward more complex technology in agriculture, our agribusinesses need to be able to hire people with a higher level of skill than was required in the past. If this initiative is funded, our partnership with ASUN will begin to solve the labor shortage problem we are facing at this time. The training potential employees will receive through the Northeast Arkansas EAT curriculum will enable these individuals to be viable workers in our farms and agribusinesses upon completing the program.

We are fully committed to bringing this initiative to fruition, look forward to being part of it, and urge you to support this project that will critically impact the farming future of Northeast Arkansas-Delta.

Sincerely,



Ryne Dubach

Eagle Lake Farms

2800 Lynn Street

Newport, Arkansas 72112

kenny@eaglelakefarm.com

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

Dear Members of the Workforce Initiative Act Review Committee:

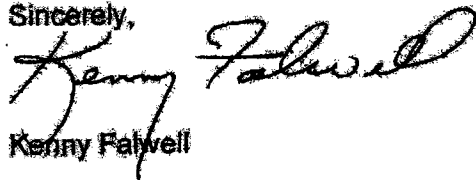
This letter of commitment assures that as an agribusiness partner with Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN) in their initiative, Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology), I will actively collaborate with the college and other partners in our area in a regional workforce alliance to support this Workforce Initiative Act grant program.

As an agricultural producer, I see first-hand the skills gap that exists in the labor pool for jobs in the industry. Having a source for trained employees will be invaluable to me and will, I believe, be advantageous to the regional economy.

I have already participated in preliminary discussions, served as an advisor to this initiative, and agreed that the targeted pathway in agricultural technology will support critical workforce needs in Northeastern Arkansas-Delta.

I am fully committed to bringing this initiative to fruition, look forward to being part of it, and urge you to support this project that will critically impact the farming future of Northeast Arkansas-Delta.

Sincerely,



Kenny Falwell

Rutledge & Rutledge

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

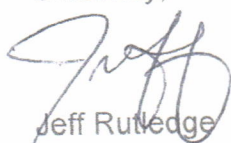
RE: WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

Dear Members of the Workforce Initiative Act Review Committee:

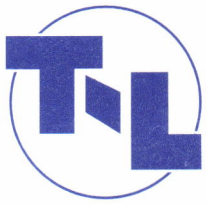
This letter of commitment assures that as an agribusiness partner with Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN) in their initiative, Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology), we will actively collaborate with the college and other partners in our area in a regional workforce alliance to support this Workforce Initiative Act grant program. We have already participated in preliminary discussions, served as advisors to this initiative, and agree that the targeted pathway in agricultural technology will support critical workforce needs in Northeastern Arkansas-Delta and create a pool of potential employees from the credentialed graduates.

We are fully committed to bringing this initiative to fruition, look forward to being part of it, and urge you to support this project that will critically impact the farming future of Northeast Arkansas-Delta.

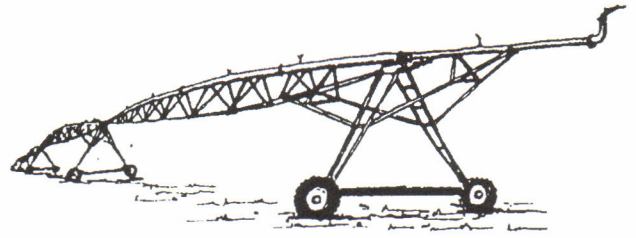
Sincerely,



Jeff Rutledge



OVER 60 YEARS
of Irrigation Excellence



YOUNG'S IRRIGATION & EQUIPMENT, LLC

808 Hwy. 367 South • P.O. Box 996 • Tuckerman, Arkansas 72473 • (870) 349-2644 • Fax (870) 349-5326 • E-mail bestsprinkler@aol.com

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Workforce initiative Act of 2015 Grant

Dear members of the Workforce initiative Act Review Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of creating a program that will hopefully provide the farmers of Northeast-Arkansas and surrounding areas a more skilled labor force to operate and manage modern agricultural farms. Farming has changed dramatically over the past fifty years. I am fifty-one years old and have been involved with the family farming operation since I was nine years old. I drove my first tractor at the age of nine. Things were simple then, you simply placed the tractor in gear lowered the implement and drove all day in the heat and dust. Today tractors, combines and sprayers all have sophisticated computer technology and guidance systems which allows the operator to track and record all aspects of the operation so accountability to the public concerning food safety and operator comfort and safety are met. This technology requires tremendous amounts of training and can only be achieved through months perhaps years of apprenticeship. The modern equipment agriculture utilizes today is very expensive and placing someone not experienced places great risk and liability on the farm owner during this training process. So much so that sometimes good people are overlooked due to the fact the farmer is not willing to take the risk of hiring a young person out of high School. I believe the agriculture industry is ready for a advanced curriculum that will provide a skilled workforce to growers and assure them if a young person walked into the office seeking a career working on a modern farm that he would be assured of getting a job and he would be paid good wages because of his knowledge he possesses and the degree he holds.

I have already participated in preliminary discussions and am willing to serve as an advisor to the initiative. Fellow farmers and I are fully committed to bringing this initiative to fruition, look forward to being a part of it and hopefully hire future graduates. I urge you to please support this project for the future of modern agriculture.

Sincerely,

Tommy Young

Generation Three Partnership Farms/Young's irrigation & Equipment LLC

D & M Farms
2808 Tammy Street
Newport, Arkansas 72112
haigwoodfamily@yahoo.com

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

Dear Members of the Workforce Initiative Act Review Committee:

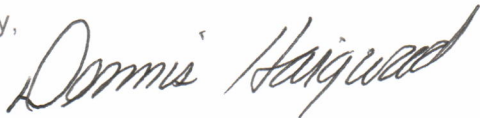
This letter of commitment assures that as an agribusiness partner with Arkansas State University-Newport (ASUN) in their initiative, Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology), I will actively collaborate with the college and other partners in our area in a regional workforce alliance to support this Workforce Initiative Act grant program.

As an agricultural producer who faces the labor issue of needing a trained staff to remain competitive, I am passionate about the need for workforce training in the agriculture industry. I have direct knowledge of the agriculture skills gap in the labor pool. A source for trained employees will be invaluable to my operation as well as beneficial to the regional economy. According to the Arkansas Farm Bureau's website, one in six jobs in Arkansas is agriculture related, and the economic impact of agriculture in the northeast corner of the state is no different.

I have already participated in preliminary discussions, served as an advisor to this initiative, and agreed that the targeted pathway in agricultural technology will support critical workforce needs in Northeastern Arkansas-Delta.

I am fully committed to bringing this initiative to fruition, look forward to being part of it, and urge you to support this project that will critically impact the farming future of Northeast Arkansas-Delta.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis Haigwood". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Dennis Haigwood



White River Planning & Development District, Inc.

(870) 793-5233 P.O. Box 2396 Batesville, Arkansas 72503-2396
Van C. Thomas – Executive Director
Fax (870) 793-4035

August 18, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

This letter of commitment assures that as a Workforce Development Board partner with Arkansas State University – Newport (ASUN), we will actively work with ASUN to support the Workforce Initiative Act grant program. We have participated in preliminary planning processes with ASUN and agree that the targeted pathways will support critical workforce needs in North Central Arkansas, based on employer and labor market demand.

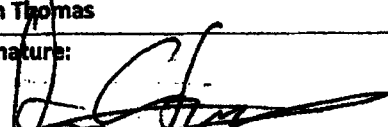
Our role as the Workforce Development Board partner will include the items checked below:

Eligibility Not Required:

- ☒ Participation in partner meetings and/or phone conferences
- ☒ Promotion of targeted pathways to job seekers through Arkansas Workforce Centers
- ☒ Employment services available through AWCs, including access to computer labs, resume preparation, and referrals to eligible programs
- ☒ Job search assistance through Arkansas JobLink
- ☒ Basic skills (soft skills) workshops
- ☒ Referrals to other WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) partner resources
- ☒ Availability of Career Readiness Certificate testing processes to all job seekers ages 18 and over
- ☒ Participation in job fairs with employers who recognize Career Readiness Certificates
- ☒ Student tours of Arkansas Workforce Centers

Eligibility Required:

- ☒ Career advising (combination of mentoring and job coaching)
- ☒ Tuition, books, and/or fees (if not available from other resource)
- ☒ Childcare, transportation, and/or housing (if not available from other resource)
- ☒ Paid or unpaid work experience

Workforce Development Board		Counties Served
North Central		Jackson, Woodruff, White, Cleburne, Independence, Stone, Izard, Sharp, Fulton, Van Buren
Contact Name	Title	Date
Van Thomas	Ex. Director, White River PDD	August 18, 2015
Signature: 		



**201 Hazel Street
Newport, AR 72112
(870) 523-1009
director@newportaredc.org**

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Newport Economic Development Commission (NEDC) understands that Arkansas State University-Newport is applying for a grant to help train and develop employees for the agriculture industry in Northeast Arkansas. They have asked the NEDC for an opinion relating to the need for employees in the agriculture industry and for the job availability for individuals completing such a program. Some of the matters referenced in this letter are based on previous knowledge and some are based on interviews with agricultural leaders conducted specifically for this request.

Agriculture is king in Northeast Arkansas as far as overall employment. If you take the direct employees (those working on farms) and the indirect employees (those working in agricultural support businesses) you will see that as a sector, agriculture employs more people than any other single sector in our economy. The issue with some of the data sources is that certain agriculture related businesses fall in other categories and are not often included in the statistics in a way that demonstrates the need for employees in this sector. The NEDC works on a regular basis with companies in agriculture and agri-related businesses on employment issues.

The Newport Special School District reintroduced an agriculture program in the local public school six years ago. The program has grown exponentially. Originally one agriculture teacher was hired. Then, in less than two years, the program had outgrown the capacity of one teacher and a second agriculture teacher was hired. The program has again reached capacity, and not all the students who desire the program are able to enroll. The Future Farmers of America Club has become the largest extracurricular

club on the Newport campus. Their teams have regularly won events at district, state and national competitions. Many of the students in the program are opting for employment directly out of high school and are having success translating the skills they've learned to the skills needed in our area.

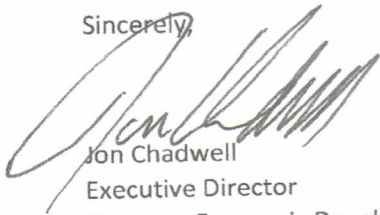
An additional factor to consider is that agricultural skills that are technology based relate very well to manufacturing settings. In fact, part of the need for additional agricultural workers trained in technology arises from the growth in manufacturing in Northeast Arkansas, which has hired workers away from the farm and into the factory. The result has been that farming is selecting from a less technologically trained pool of employees. On the plus side, agricultural wages are rising to help retain the more skilled workers and to attract new employees.

One agricultural research company located in Jackson County contacted us recently seeking two people who would work with them to test the effects of pesticides on various plants. They were willing to pay a starting wage of \$70,000 for an employee who had the technological training to work advanced equipment in the field and testing equipment in the lab. Jobs such as these are becoming more and more common in our area.

We encourage you to give this grant application serious consideration and approve the funding. The program as envisioned by Arkansas State University – Newport can have transformative results for agriculture as an industry in our area. More importantly it can transform the lives of students who have a strong desire to work in the increasingly complex field of agriculture.

If you would like to visit with me further about the role agriculture plays in our economic development efforts, please feel free to call me at (870) 523-1009 or email at director@newportaredc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jon Chadwell", written over a horizontal line.

Jon Chadwell

Executive Director

Newport Economic Development Commission



phone 870 358 1886 office 10 Elm Street, Marked Tree, AR 72365 www.ritterag.com

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

This letter of commitment is written in support of Arkansas State University-Newport's (ASUN) initiative: Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology). I urge you to give serious consideration to their proposal which addresses the very real need to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

Founded by Ernest Ritter in Marked Tree, Arkansas, in 1886, Ritter Agribusiness—a division of E. Ritter & Company—has grown to be one of the most respected farm management and grain service providers in Eastern Arkansas. Ritter Agribusiness will collaborate with ASUN throughout the planning process and hope to create or enhance programs that will meet this critical skills gap.

I urge you to support this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Woody Ray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Woody Ray
Ritter Agribusiness

NEWPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT

406 Wilkerson Drive
Newport, Arkansas 72112
(870) 523-1311 • Fax (870) 523-1388

August 27, 2015

Workforce Initiative Act Grant Review Committee
Attn: Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF 2015 GRANT

This letter of commitment is written in support of Arkansas State University-Newport's (ASUN) initiative: Northeast Arkansas EAT (Educating Agriculture Technology). I urge you to give serious consideration to their proposal which addresses the very real need to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

The Newport Special School District has strong career and technical education programs and has been a recognized leader in K-12 Agriculture education for many years. Newport High School has established programs in Precision Agriculture and is committed to meeting the needs of the regional agricultural based workforce. Our School has already joined this collaboration and will continue our support throughout the Planning process.

I urge you to support this project.

Sincerely,



Larry G. Bennett, PhD
Superintendent of Schools



"The Tradition Continues"

JOHN BOOZMAN
ARKANSAS

320 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-4843

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:

AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

APPROPRIATIONS

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

August 28, 2015

Dr. Brett Powell
Director
Arkansas Department of Higher Education
423 Main Street, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201-3801

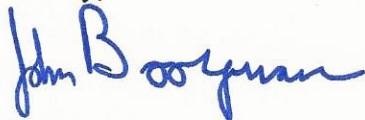
Dear Dr. Powell,

I am very happy to express my support for the Arkansas State University-Newport (ASU-Newport) proposal to receive funding through the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. ASU-Newport will use funds received to educate agricultural workers and fill the skill gaps in modern agriculture resulting from new and innovative technology.

Northeast Arkansas leads the state in many agriculture related industries. This project will help with agricultural education by using a collaboration among K-12 schools, workforce agencies, industry and agricultural employers, and higher education. ASU-Newport will work with these partners to form a vibrant, robust regional workforce-agribusiness alliance to support the Workforce Initiative Act grant program. They have already participated in preliminary discussions and agree that the targeted pathway in agriculture will support critical workforce needs in Northeastern Arkansas and create a pool of potential employees from the graduates who, in turn, will revitalize the Delta. I hope you will share my belief that this project clearly fits the application guidelines and will be beneficial to residents in Arkansas.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this matter, and please keep me informed of the status of this funding request. I am grateful for the help your office provides to the people of Arkansas.

Sincerely,



John Boozman
U.S. Senator

JB: tr

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SUITE 104
EL DORADO, AR 71730
870-863-4641

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SUITE B
FORT SMITH, AR 72901
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LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201
501-372-7153

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LOWELL, AR 72745
479-725-0400

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SUITE 11
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72653
870-424-0129

620 E. 22ND ST.
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STUTTGART, AR 72160
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