



Act 1131 of 2015

Regional Workforce Planning Grant

APPLICATION COVER SHEET

DUE SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

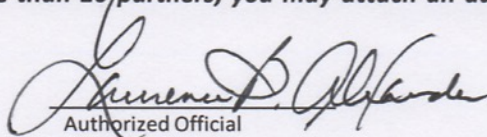
To:	Arkansas Department of Higher Education		
Requesting Institution:	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff		
Title of Project:	Jefferson STEM Workforce Initiative		
Project Partners:	1. Southeast Arkansas College 2. Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas 3. Pine Bluff School District 4. National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR)	6. Watson Chapel School District 7. Arkansas River Educational Service Cooperative 8. Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas 9. Evergreen Packaging 10. Kiswire, Inc.	
Requested Budget:	\$100,000		
Date Submitted:	9-01-2015		
Applicant Contact:	Dr. Jessie J. Walker		
Applicant's Information:	1200 N University Dr. Pine Bluff, AR 71601 870/575/8774 walkerjj@uapb.edu		

Authorized Signatures for Project Partners

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

University of Arkansas at
Pine Bluff

Lead Institution


Authorized Official

Southeast Arkansas College

Partner

Authorized Official

Evergreen Packaging

Partner

Authorized Official

Economic Development Alliance
for Jefferson County, AR

Partner

Authorized Official

AR River Educational Service
Cooperative

Partner

Authorized Official

Pine Bluff School Dist.

Partner

Authorized Official

Watson Chapel School Dist.

Partner

Authorized Official

National Center for
Toxicological Research

Partner

Authorized Official

Arts & Science Center
of Southeast Arkansas

Partner

Authorized Official

STANT Inc.

Partner

Authorized Official

Partner

Authorized Official

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.

1.1 Introduction

Southeastern Arkansas, widely referred to as the Delta, currently has a high unemployment rate of (10.6%), steady population decline (15%) and remains one of the poorest regions in the nation with declining per capita income. This region is by far the state's most ethnically diverse section of the state as African-Americans alone account for 37% of the population. Based on U.S. Census Bureau data (2010-2012), the median income for Blacks was \$27,860 and \$50,078 for Whites. Economically, this region depends on agriculture and traditional manufacturing – two sectors with diminishing returns. While much of the rest of the nation has made the transition to technology-oriented employment and a growing professional service sector, the Delta region has yet to fully develop its knowledge- and technological-based economy. Despite these numerous economic difficulties, the Delta region of Arkansas has steadily increased its STEM population of young professionals. The Arkansas Governor's 2012 Strategic Plan includes goals to increase the income of Arkansans at a rate faster than the national average, expand the knowledge-based entrepreneurship, help businesses to compete more effectively in the global market place, and double the college graduates by 2025. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is well positioned to play a significant role in expanding the unique workforce and economy of this region through its existing exceptional research and educational activities.

This project is designed to carefully explore the integration of workforce development strategies into a coherent plan that involves students (K-16+), educators (at K-12, college and universities), career professionals, and employers. One of the key drivers of the economy has been the aging population, which has resulted in a greater demand for careers in the healthcare industry. Overall, the region has seen a significant growth in service sector employment, while the goods production sector has remained unchanged, according the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. In addition, production and transportation occupations within the region have seen noteworthy gains in the region, as listed in figure 1.

Many employers in the region still struggle to find, hire, and retain employees with tangible, middle-skill job skill sets, particularly in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that require critical thinking, advanced mathematics, mechanical reasoning, and analytical skills. These skills gaps also limit the region's ability to attract and expand industries in advanced manufacturing, information technology, green energy, biosciences, distribution, and logistics services.

Occupations with the highest location quotient in South Arkansas nonmetropolitan area, May 2014



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 1. Workforce Trends with Southeast Arkansas

Workforce training depends, as never before, on easy of access to an ecosystem of training resources and shared infrastructure. Industries that were once local, isolated in a region, state, or country, are now connected on a global scale. Specialized equipment that was spread across multiple locations can now fit into a single location and is connected via cyber infrastructure resources. The proposed program is designed to address both current and expected workforce needs as defined by employers in the region by aligning the following goals and developing programs that deliver on them.

The specific goals of the proposed project include:

- Strengthening partnerships between institutions of higher education through collaboration on curriculum development and articulation agreements;
- Providing opportunities for professional development so that working professionals can develop / improve competences, enhance career progression and keep abreast of new workforce practices;
- Strengthening partnerships with local industry and employers by convening advisory committees, arranging student tours and industry sites, and inviting industry speakers into the classroom;
- Exploring apprenticeship programs with regional employers for K-16 students; and,
- Developing new teaching expertise in local workforce needs, especially in high schools.

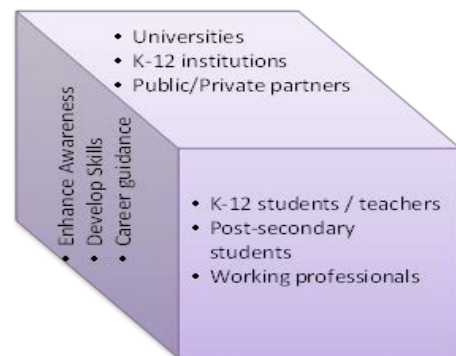
1.2 Scope

Workforce development is a key tool in the economic development toolkit. Workforce development has emerged to describe a relatively wide range of activities, policies, and programs. While multiple definitions exist, we organize the scope of involvement in workforce development around three different areas of focus for the region, including:

1. How to develop a pipeline of students who are excited about joining the workforce and prepare them for post-secondary education to ensure a sustainable workforce;
2. How to train and prepare individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce with proper skill sets;
and,
3. How to enable existing and potential workers to improve workplace performance and stay competitive in a global marketplace.

This project addresses the three focus areas of Southeast Arkansas development in the following ways, including:

- Establishing partnerships between educational institutions, industry partners and public sector organizations;
- Targeting numerous subgroups of intended audiences: post-secondary students (university and community college students), K-12 students, working professionals and respective educators (career counselors, teachers, faculty) including minorities, women, and veterans; and,
- Teaching and increasing awareness of fundamental of middle skills/STEM concepts, providing opportunities to develop/hone these skills and provide career guidance to individuals at all levels.



1.3 Time and Task Table

The proposed planning project activities will be implemented in a twelve-month timeframe. Each activity is represented as discrete, three-month periods or phases and their individual implementation date range. Therefore, project deliverables are associated with a twelve months timeframe, which enhances assessment of individual activities within the project timeline as listed in figure 2.

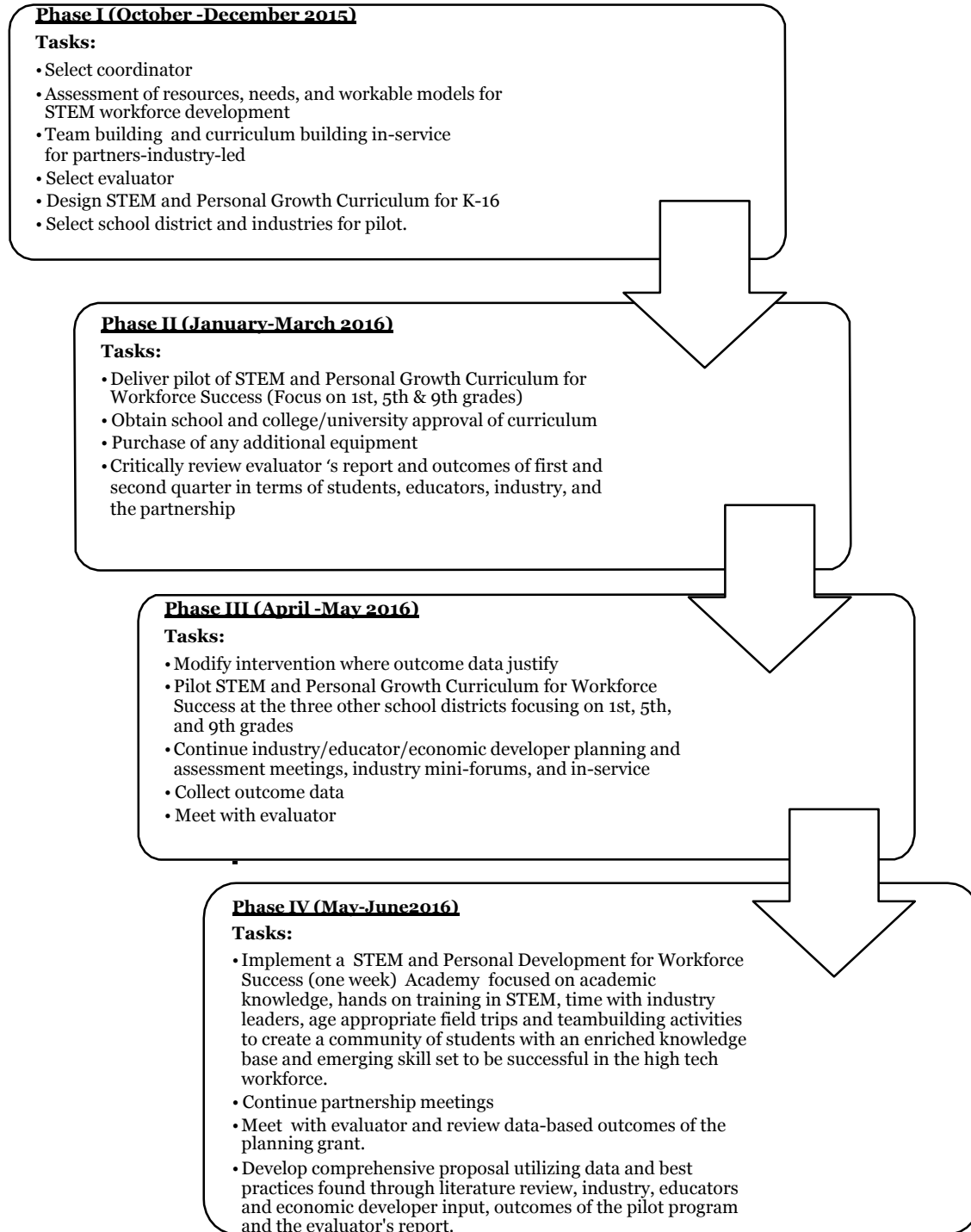


Figure 2. Time and Task Table

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.

The purpose of this planning project is to explore a comprehensive, regional community-of-practice around workforce demands within the region. One of the main purposes of the planning project is to create regional “social learning systems”, where practitioners, employers, and educational institutions, and economic development personnel connect to solve both immediate and enduring workforce problems, share ideas, set standards, build tools, and develop relationships with peers and stakeholders. Because the proposed planning project is an inherently boundary-crossing community, the activities will have a far-reaching impact. The project will implement the following activities over a twelve-month period to enhance the career pathways with associated measurable outcomes.

Planning Objectives:**Objective 1: Developing K-16 Career Pathways Pipeline**

Studies have shown that most students form opinions on majors or careers during middle school and high school. The top four influences on a career choice reported by students were personal interest, parents, earning potential, and teachers. Teachers and parents have strong influences on a student’s consideration of potential careers. However, teachers’ and parents’ knowledge of regional occupations and career pathways is very limited today in Southeast Arkansas. This has the potential to seriously prevent students from considering careers in the region and in STEM.

This project will engage students, teachers, and counselors in innovative, hands-on training and applied sciences competitions that will motivate students to pursue degrees and careers in fields in Southeast Arkansas. A key activity will be the exploration mechanisms of providing experiential learning opportunities that will take the form of apprenticeships that create meaningful and worthwhile experiences for diverse student groups, both traditional and nontraditional. The notion of an apprenticeship for sustained learning has been around since the 1600s in the United States. Using this model, a person would go through a system of training led by a master practitioner to obtain the necessary skills to become proficient in a valuable field. The traditional 12 curriculum will also, be enriched by adding applied STEM information and exposure.

We propose the following activities to develop a pipeline of students who are excited about STEM careers:

- Information sessions for students and parents to increase their awareness of employment opportunities with regional industries and career choices, and address common misconceptions about the type and nature of regional industries;
- Mentorship support for projects to be presented in science fairs, support high school teams for competitions, and provide hands-on investigative project-like experiences for the high school juniors and seniors by leveraging existing infrastructure such as Project Lead the Way.
- Training and support to high school teachers and modules that will be provided can be integrated into their curriculum in non-invasive ways that also emphasize opportunities for Professional Development credit.
- Workshops for high school career counselors, organized in ways that introduce them to the critical need to meet workforce demands in Southeast Arkansas and enhance their knowledge of career options, and related educational pathways.

We also will organize visits for K-12 students and post-secondary students to industry, businesses, and facilities to explore practical aspects of workforce needs in the region. These Workforce-Site Visits (WSV) will bring valuable experience, research opportunities, and knowledge of career options to participants. These visits will provide opportunities where students can explore careers pathways in the region. Our industry partners will provide apprenticeships/internship/shadowing or similar opportunities to qualified students to further enhance their experiences and prepare them for careers.

- **Phase I (October 1-December 20, 2015):**
 - **Milestone I:** 10~15 participants from participating school districts/ institutions
- **Phase II (January 10-March 31, 2016):**
 - **Milestone II:** 10% increase in participation from participating school districts/institutions
- **Phase III (April 1-May 30, 2016):**
 - **Milestone III:** 10% increase in participation from participating school districts/institutions

Objective 2: Developing Workforce Ready Curriculum K-16

The need for incorporating practical workforce training into many elements of K-12/post- secondary curriculum has already been recognized by project partners. The objective is to produce K-12 and post-secondary school graduates who bring up-to-date, applicable workforce-ready skills into their daily lives.

We propose the following activities to train and prepare individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce with proper skill sets:

- Develop new, industry-specific training modules and make them and existing available modules to faculty who are teaching a wide variety of courses in the region, so that career pathways training is introduced at all levels of the K-16 pipeline.
- Explore the development of certification programs for high-school graduates, college students, and working professional based on career pathways.
- Provide self-contained learning modules suitable for use in classes anywhere in the K-16 pipeline. The intent is to make these modules minimally invasive and maximally applicable to the students' lives.
- Work with student associations and clubs to increase awareness of career choices and career paths in the region.

- Provide hands-on, high-quality and closely- mentored opportunities for undergraduate and K-12 students.
- **Phase I (October 1-December 20, 2015):**
 - **Milestone I:** 20~25 participants per course, per academic semester.
- **Phase II (January 10-March 31, 2016):**
 - **Milestone II:** 10% increases in participation from phase one per academic semester in new courses
- **Phase III (April 1-May 30, 2016):**
 - **Milestone III:** 10% increases in participation from phase two per academic semester in new courses

All of these curriculum activities will be listed on a regional workforce portal in the form of a wiki, providing a one-stop resource for interested students, parents, faculty, and professionals.

Objective 3: Developing regional Workforce working groups

Industry Symposia/mini-meetings: While courses are important, we also want to create a network of parties who can help and inspire each other and encourage cross-disciplinary exchange about workforce needs in the region. The project team will gauge workforce skill gaps and career pathway training opportunities between institutions, industry, and the K-12 communities. The symposia/mini-meetings will be designed to orient and discuss recent workforce development within the region and how individuals can take an active part in the future direction of specific fields. The project will host three symposia/mini-meetings on current skill gaps and employment demands of partner industries. The groups will be comprised as follows: (1) Biotechnology, (2) Manufacturing, (3) Technology and services industries.

- **Phase I (October 1-December 20, 2015):**
 - **Milestone I: (Biotechnology)** 20~25 participants
- **Phase II (January 10-March 31, 2016):**
 - **Milestone II: (Manufacturing)** 20~25 participants
- **Phase III (April 1-May 30, 2016):**
 - **Milestone III: (Technology/Services)** 20~25 participants

Social Network of Regional Workforce Career Pathways: We will encourage all partners to participate in regional workforce social media-oriented sites such as Twitter, Facebook sites. The desire is to form an online community around workforce demands in the region, skill gaps, and training opportunities. The online community also has the advantage of providing a universal medium for reaching the next generation of workers. In addition, all materials from worksite visits will be posted on a YouTube channel for the project. It is expected this type of outreach will provide venues for mentoring and connections that will cross gender, racial and language boundaries.

Evaluation Plan: The evaluation and reporting plan is designed to ensure that all objectives of this project are achieved. The plan includes a mix of formative and summative assessment methods, which will provide quantitative and qualitative data throughout the duration and beyond the program. The end goal of the evaluation and reporting is to determine the current effectiveness of the project activities at achieving our objectives and to make adjustments to better achieve our objectives.

The School of Education at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, will serve as the Internal Evaluation Team. The School's staff has extensive experience in research and evaluation, and has worked with regional and state organizations to provide evaluation services for educational, as well as training, and other types of programs. Of particular advantage here is the School's experience in conducting evaluations of educational programs (particularly reading and STEM programs) from middle school through college, as well as training programs for specific adult populations.

The evaluation stems directly from the objectives of the project and will serve both formative and summative functions and is presented in Table 1. During this planning project virtually all evaluation activities will serve formative purposes in that they will be used to ensure that sufficient progress is being made toward the project's goals and objectives, and to identify any modifications that are needed to improve future such projects relating to workforce (e.g., surveys will reflect the value and utility of the training and include counts of meetings and sessions to assess progress). Specific evaluation activities will include monitoring the quality of student, teacher, and professional participation in workshops (e.g., through session evaluations), administering interest/attitude surveys of students and working professionals (through focused surveys specific to the project), and monitoring the development of key elements such as an advisory committee and intern agreements.

Table 1: Evaluation Plan

Objectives	Outcomes	Measures
Increasing interest in careers pathways among K-12 and college students by hosting information sessions and workshops for secondary students, and industry tours and guest speakers for college students and mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of top quality information sessions and workshops will be held for secondary students # industry tours and guest speakers will be held for college students and college mentors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of sessions/workshops held, including topic, objective, and # of student participants; summary of findings and feedback from session/workshop evaluations Interest surveys for secondary students List of industry tours and guest speakers, including
Strengthening partnerships between institutions of higher education through collaboration on curriculum development and articulation agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New workforce curricula will be developed. Articulation agreements will be created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of meetings between institutions (e.g., minutes of meetings, participants) Record of contacts and discussions (e.g., number and participants)
Providing opportunities for professional development so that working professionals can develop / improve competence in workforce ready skills to enhance career progression, and keep abreast of new technology and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Professional development opportunities will be provided for working professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of professional development opportunities provided, including topics, objectives, and participants (# & organizations/companies) Attitude survey for working professionals
Strengthening partnerships with local industry and employers by convening advisory committees, arranging student tours and apprenticeships, internships, shadowing, and other means of placement at industry sites, and inviting industry speakers into the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an advisory committee of local industry and employers Create intern placement opportunities for students Create learning activities for students through tours and guest speakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor advisory committee development (e.g., list of contacts made, meetings, minutes from meetings) Monitor intern agreements and placements List of industry tours and guest speakers, including objectives and # of students attending. Evaluate employer satisfaction

Developing new teaching expertise in didactic and experiential teaching of STEM curriculum, especially in high schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Professional development opportunities will be provided for high school teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of professional development opportunities provided, including topics, objectives, and # of participants Knowledge/Competence test in for high school teachers
Increasing the diversity of the workforce by recruiting women, veterans, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A diverse group of students will be recruited to participate in the project's activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor demographics of students and professionals involved in projects. Monitor recruitment efforts of the project.

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.

Institution, K-12 and Industry partnership

The planning team consists of collaborators from universities, community college, K-12 institutions and public/private sector that are well-suited to foster a strong University/ K-12/ Industry partnership in both the near and long term. Figure 3 illustrates the individual roles of project partners.

Institution Partners

The planning team consists of researchers and educators with significant experience in collaborating in the region, particularly between Southeast Arkansas College, and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. The lead institution has secured grants collaboratively such as the National Science Foundation HBCU-UP STEM and Arkansas Alliance for Minority Participation, while also sharing unique curriculum articulation agreements.

K-12 Partners

Multiple schools have recognized the significance and need of our project and have extended strong support to the project activities. The school districts partnering with this project includes: Watson Chapel School, White Hall School, Pine Bluff School, and Dollarway School. Support letters are enclosed in the appendix. Furthermore, two unique partners are participating in unifying services in the project: the Arkansas River Education Services Cooperative and the Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas. Each organization plays a vital role in coordinating programs between university personnel and school personnel to strengthen the connections between K-12 and higher education and is committed to this project. Furthermore, each organization provides high quality, innovative STEM educational opportunities through collaboration, professional development, K-16 outreach, and the sharing of instructional resources. The extensive networking within Southeast Arkansas will be used to promote, disseminate, and replicate programs developed through this grant.

Industry Partners

Companies ranging from small businesses to multi-national attested that this proposal is timely and addresses a critical regional need. They have pledged strong support for this project. This industrial partnership is led by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas (Alliance). Companies include W. & A. Manufacturing Co., STANT Corp, Kiswire Pine Bluff, Inc, Evergreen Packaging, Gavilow Group, The Strong Company, Inc., and MK Distributors. Additionally, the National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR) enthusiastically supports this grant. NCTR is a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) research facility designed to promote and protect public health. The facility hosts regulatory science researchers, academic professionals, other regulatory science research organizations, and groups from around the world.

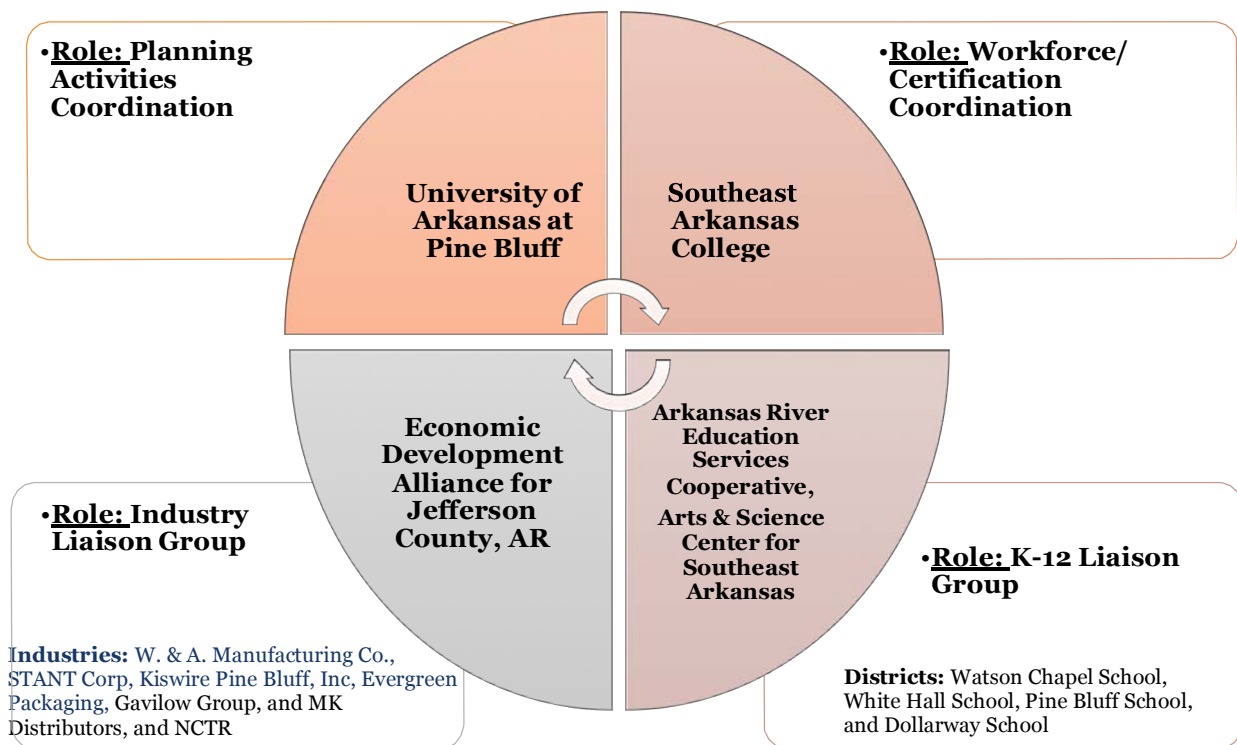


Figure 3. Project Partners Roles

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.

Personnel

Funding is requested to hire/cover time for an individual to act as Program Activity Manager to coordinate all events associated with project planning, organization, and scheduling, at rate of \$25,000.00. The individual's fringe rate will be calculated based on UAPB existing fringe agreement of 31% of total salaries. (Fringe: \$2,620.00)

Total Requested: \$27,620.00

Travel

Funding is requested to provide travel and associated facilities for attendance at the K- 12 school districts in the surrounding area, industrial partners meetings, seminars for collaboration meetings, and WFSV. Community Forums (n=4) to obtain input and needs assessment from all parties involved to insure transparency, guest speakers/lecturers visit to speak at forum meetings to address plan implementation.

Total Requested: \$12,000.00

Other

Funds are requested to facilitate meeting activities, provide resources to prototype curriculum activities, such as mobile laboratory equipment, robotic kits, software, and computer equipment.

Total Requested: \$15,000.00

TOTAL PARTNER PARTICIPANT COSTS: \$54,620.00

Other Direct Costs

Materials and Supplies:

Funds are requested for general office supplies and materials for planning, loaded flash drives, posters, artwork development, and promotional items (pens, shirts, trinkets).

Total Requested: \$15,000.00

Publications/Dissemination

Funds are requested to develop brochures, posters, future banners, table throw and recruitment materials for planning activities and other dissemination materials for the community.

Total Requested: \$10,380.00

Consultant Services/Evaluator

Funds are requested to bring in expert consults to provide project-based and community-based approaches to enhance workforce readiness. In addition, the project will bring in a UAPB project evaluator from the school of education to measure project activities to ensure progress is being achieved as outlined in the project's timetable.

Total Requested: \$20,000.00

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	<u>\$27,620.00</u>
2. Travel	<u>\$12,000.00</u>
3. Other (Explain Below)	<u>\$15,000.00</u>

Briefly Explain Other Costs

TOTAL PARTNER PARTICIPANT COSTS	<u>\$54,620.00</u>
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B. Other Direct Costs

1. Materials and Supplies	<u>\$15,000.00</u>
2. Publication Costs/Documentation/Dissemination	<u>\$10,380.00</u>
3. Consultant Services	<u>\$20,000.00</u>
4. Other (Explain Below)	<u>\$0.00</u>

Briefly Explain Other Costs

TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS	<u>\$45,380.00</u>
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C. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS

	<u>\$100,000.00</u>
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PINE BLUFF SCHOOL DISTRICT

512 S. Pine St. P.O. Box 7678 Pine Bluff, AR 71601
Phone: 870.543.4203 • 870.543.4204
Fax: 870.543.4208

Office of the Superintendent

September 1, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

Pine Bluff School District is pleased to partner with UAPB and other local schools in the Jefferson County area to secure the planning grant for workforce development. As we ensure the advancement of the population in the PBSB, this grant has the potential to help many young individuals that we serve. This grant between the school districts and the university has the potential to change the landscape and the needs of the young people throughout the region.

The PBSB is pleased and looking forward to the opportunity to better serve our students.

Professionally,

Dr. T.C. Wallace Jr., Superintendent



Food and Drug Administration



NCTR

National Center for Toxicological Research

August 28, 2015

Jessie Walker, Ph.D, Chairperson
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
1200 N. University Dr.
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Dear Dr. Walker:

The Food and Drug Administration's National Center for Toxicological Research Laboratories has a long-standing relationship with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and leveraged this relationship in numerous ways, particularly in the recruitment of well qualified young STEM professionals. The region's ability to supply corporations with qualified, in-demand talent depends on the close partnership between the NCTR and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). Our mutual goal is to help create, attract, and maintain a globally competitive workforce, infrastructure to meet research needs.

It is with great enthusiasm that the NCTR supports the Jefferson STEM Workforce Initiative at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. The proposed infrastructure offers a unique opportunity to expand research collaboration between our institutions. This development is critical in our efforts to increase world-class research currently being conducted within Arkansas.

The project, likewise, has the potential to have a major impact on the production of collaborative workforce endeavors in Arkansas, particularly within Jefferson County. The program will be the first of its kind in southeastern Arkansas, fulfilling a key need to enhance the community of researchers, educators, and industry partners, which are vital to the next generation of growth for Southeastern Arkansas and the nation. In addition, the proposed center's research activities, particularly in big data movement, will directly impact the NCTR existing research infrastructure, principally the proposed Bioplex Technology Center (BTC), where industry, academia, federal government, and state and local government share resources for technology development, transfer, and commercialization in life and agricultural sciences.

We are proudly committed to this partnership. It fosters the expansion of research initiatives that solve pressing national FDA research, accelerates the development of STEM students, and adds to the environment for enriching research and employment opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Weida Tong', is written over the word 'Sincerely'.

Weida Tong, Ph.D
Director, Division of Bioinformatics and Biostatistics



Economic Development
ALLIANCE
for Jefferson County, Arkansas

Pine Bluff Regional Chamber of Commerce Δ Jefferson County Industrial Foundation

Pine Bluff-Jefferson County Port Authority Δ Bioplex

August 26, 2015

Laurence B. Alexander, Ph.D.
Chancellor
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
1200 North University Drive
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Chancellor Alexander:

Our region faces a critical need for technically proficient, credentialed, and reliable workers for the manufacturing sector. In the Jefferson County area alone, manufacturing comprises approximately 20% of our economy and employs close to 5,000 people. Far too often, our employers do not have access to qualified job applicants for open positions. We frequently hear that our companies wish to continue growing here, but that they need workers with a mastery of basic, general education and technical skills in order to do so.

The Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas (Alliance) supports the project envisioned by the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff to take immediate steps to organize, promote, and manage career pathways for students to enter industrial careers, especially the STEM fields. We wish to partner with your team in realizing the tangible results of this vision as proposed in your application for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015.

Thank you for the opportunity to shape the development of our workforce and increase the regional pipeline of workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO



Southeast Arkansas College

1900 Hazel St., Pine Bluff, AR 71603

Tel (870) 543-5900 ■ Fax (870) 543-5927 ■ 1-888-SEARKTC (Toll Free) ■ e-mail: MAIN@STC.SEARK.TEC.AR.US

August 26, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Ms. Nisbett:

This letter is in support of the Regional Workforce Grant application being submitted by the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). This grant will help UAPB increase the local pipeline of reliable workers entering manufacturing careers at their companies.

SEARK recognizes the substantial role that UAPB plays in the educational needs of Pine Bluff and surrounding areas. SEARK is committed to serving on advisory boards and working with UAPB and give input on curricula, equipment, and learning activities.

SEARK supports and hopes that funding can be made available to expand UAPB's training opportunities allowing individuals to gain skill sets that will fill local workforce voids.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Hilterbran
President, Southeast Arkansas College

ASC

The Arts & Science Center for Southeast Arkansas

ASC701.org

870.536.3375
701 S. Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

August 28, 2015

Letter of support for the Workforce Grant: Southeast Arkansas

Dear Review Panel,

This letter is in support of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's application for a planning grant to build a stronger workforce in Southeast Arkansas. My support is three fold: as an informal learning STEM museum, as an institution that offers internships to college students, and as an employer.

I support this planning grant because The Arts & Science Center already offers school field trips that include hands-on STEM activities: coding, electronic circuitry, and stop-motion animation. Children will be inspired by these fun introductions to technology. This grant will provide greater access to our resources and we welcome this collaboration between the university, regional schools, and our museum. As a museum that is accredited with the American Alliance of Museums (the gold standard in our field) it is our duty to serve the educational needs of our community.

Our internship program provides paid internships to college students and, as an accredited museum these young people learn best practices and high work standards. In every aspect of the operation, from education to administration, interns gain real workplace skills that will carry through their careers. All successful interns have been hired, in their field of study, immediately upon graduation.

As a regional employer I can attest to the fact that we struggle to find qualified employees. This grant addresses the need for better trained employees at all levels and we applaud the effort to unify across K-16 schooling, manufacturing, and non-profit entities.

We have a strong team and this planning grant will help us to solve one of the greatest barriers to economic viability in southeast Arkansas—a qualified workforce. Please support our efforts.

Sincerely,

Lenore Shoults, Ph.D.

Executive Director



Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative

912 West Sixth Street * Pine Bluff, AR 71601 O: (870) 534-6129 F: (870) 534-2847



August 28, 2015

Dr. Laurence B. Alexander, Chancellor
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
1200 North University Drive, Mail Slot 4982
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

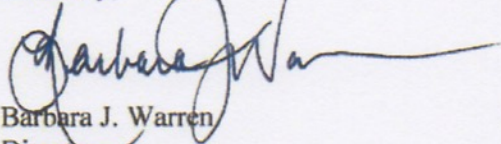
Dear Dr. Alexander,

On behalf of the Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative (ARESC), it brings me great pleasure to write this letter in support of the project targets that the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) proposes through the Regional Workforce Initiative. There is an immense need in this area and I am confident that the proposed course of action, if approved, would have a phenomenal impact on our community's economic position and future outlook.

UAPB and ARESC share a rich history over many years as partners in service to education and our joint community stakeholders. ARESC is an education service center established to provide support to the school districts in our service area of Arkansas, Jefferson, and Grant counties making us a natural partner for this work. One of the divisions of our organization is the Jefferson Area Career and Technical Center (JATCC). JATCC provide career and technical programs of study for participating 10th -12th grade students in our Jefferson County school districts. The Dollarway, Pine Bluff, Watson Chapel, and White Hall School Districts serve as funders and board members of the center. Serving between 220-250 students each year through our STEM related offerings; we are directly aligned to this initiative. In addition to this center, we provide professional development offerings in various content areas to include the STEM areas of study.

I applaud the efforts of the University and commit ARESC's support, resources, energies, and ideas to this initiative. We look forward to working with business and industry and the other partners to improve the outcomes for our students and the citizenry of our city and our state.

Sincerely,



Barbara J. Warren
Director

Watson Chapel School District

MEMBER OF NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

4100 CAMDEN ROAD

PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS 71603

Phone 870-879-0220 870-879-0221

FAX 870-879-0588

August 26, 2015

Dr. Laurence B. Alexander, J.D., Ph.D.

Chancellor

1200 North University Drive

Mail Slot 4982

Pine Bluff, AR 71603

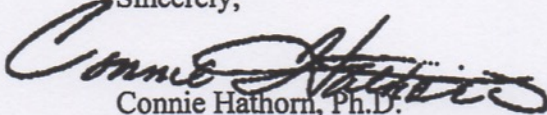
Dear Chancellor Alexander:

I write this letter in full support of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Scholars program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). I am a 1973 graduate of UAPB/AM&N and the Superintendant of the Watson Chapel School District in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

As an educator and administrator, I understand the importance and vitality of STEM programs for students across the country. The partnership between the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, school districts, the Educational Services Cooperative, The Arkansas Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas and area employers can only strengthen and enhance STEM programs for resources to enrich student skills especially in the Watson Chapel School District.

The STEM Scholars Program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and its vigor has added life and value to so many students in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. I know this partnership will positively contribute to the Watson Chapel School District therefore; I give my unyielding support to the STEM program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

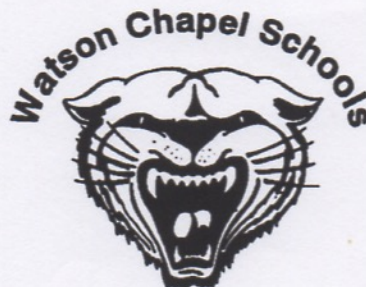
Sincerely,



Connie Hathorn, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Watson Chapel School District



"Preparing today's students for tomorrow's opportunities"



Pine Bluff Facility
5201 Fairfield Road • Pine Bluff, AR 71601

August 28, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

My company supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015. Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students in our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Lichty", is written over the printed name.

Craig Lichty
General Manager – Arkansas Operations
Evergreen Packaging – Pine Bluff Mill

fresh by design™

Doing Business in California as Evergreen Beverage Packaging



August 26, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

Stant USA Corporation supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015.

Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students at our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Fenton", followed by a horizontal line.

Patrick Fenton
Human Resources Manager



PHONE 870/534-7420 • P.O. BOX 5238 • 1810 OHIO ST. • PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS 71611

August 26, 2015

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

My company supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015. We would most definitely be able to participate in advisory roles and if possible offer apprenticeship opportunities as business conditions allow. Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students at our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,
Jeff Vanderpool



August 25, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

My company supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015. Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students at our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,

Lanita Plunkett
Human Resources Manager

KISWIRE PINE BLUFF, INC.
5100 Industrial Drive South
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71602
Phone: 870-247-2444 Fax: 870-247-1622

LETTERHEAD

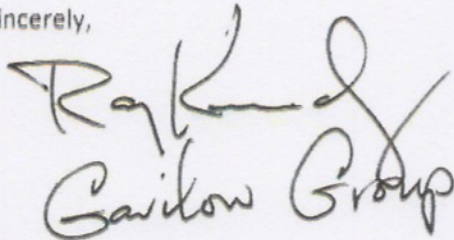
August 26, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

My company supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015. Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students at our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,


Ray K. Gailow
Gailow Group



DISTRIBUTORS, INC.

NICK MAKRIS
V.P. OF SALES

August 28, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

My company supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015.

Our company distributes beer. We feel that engaging with students under the legal drinking age about our business requires that we talk about the broader manufacturing process and marketplace. Additionally, it is against the law for us to have anyone under 21 years of age in our plant. As such, we decline participation in the planning grant as outlined in the proposal (i.e. apprenticeships and advisory board). However, we are open to a future financial commitment to support capital or other programmatic expenditures in the implementation of the grant.

Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students at our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Makris', is written over the 'Sincerely,' text.



August 27, 2015

Lou Ann Nisbett
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County, Arkansas
510 Main Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Mrs. Nisbett:

My company supports workforce development efforts in Jefferson County. We wish to be an industry partner in the project proposed by the Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff for a Regional Workforce Planning Grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as authorized by Act 1131 of 2015. Thank you for the opportunity to shape the career aspirations of students at our area schools and increase the regional pipeline of STEM-proficient, reliable workers prepared to enter manufacturing careers.

Sincerely,

Tim DeJarnette
President

The Strong Company, Inc.

4505 Emmett Sanders Road • Pine Bluff, AR 71601
(870) 535-7617 • 800-982-8009 • Fax (870) 850-6933

Website: www.strongseal.com

Email: info@strongseal.com

(Operating as Strong-Seal® Systems Corp. In the States of AL, MN & TX)



UNIVERSITY
of ARKANSAS
AT PINE BLUFF
1873

Office of the Chancellor

August 31, 2015

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

Dear Dr. Powell:

I am delighted to give my enthusiastic support for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's proposal to receive the Arkansas Department of Higher Education's Regional Workforce Planning Grant.

Since its establishment, our university has worked to create an environment that inculcates the values of learning, growth, and productivity as we work diligently to advance our students. We are committed to providing a high quality education as well as enabling opportunity and access to many deserving and qualified underrepresented students in the Arkansas Delta.

In our efforts to ensure student success, we have developed partnerships that not only promote academic, social, and cultural development but also contribute to our endeavors in preparing students for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. We also are conscious of the need to prepare students for the 21st century globalized workforce, which in turn contributes to the economic prosperity of our region, state, and nation.

As the Southeastern region of the state has faced numerous economic and employment challenges, it is imperative that workforce training, particularly in the areas of STEM, expands to allow industries to grow in the region. I believe the Regional Workforce Planning Grant will afford our university and our partners the opportunity and additional resources to help alleviate some of the region's challenges by providing training and enhancing the job-skill set of students and working professionals in those areas by strengthening our programs and initiatives as well as providing professional development. This grant will also allow our institution and partners to contribute to increasing diversity in the workforce by producing more well-prepared graduates with marketable skills, which are much needed for the advancement of the region and the knowledge-based economy.

We have formed a strong interdisciplinary team that researched and designed a definitive strategy to help increase knowledge-infused individuals for the regional workforce; collaborations with other institutions of higher education on curriculum development and articulation agreements; providing opportunities for professional development to enhance career progression, strengthening partnerships with local industry, employers and the school districts, exploring apprenticeship programs with regional employers for K-16 students, and many more. With the assistance of the Regional Workforce Planning Grant, I am confident that we will assist in producing significant outcomes in strengthening our region through the implementation of even more effective programs and initiatives that will enhance the workforce.

We are very appreciative of this opportunity, and we look forward to working with you for the continued success of our university, region, and nation.

Sincerely,

Laurence B. Alexander, J.D., Ph.D.
Chancellor

1200 N. University Drive, Mail Slot 4982 · Pine Bluff, AR 71601
Office: (870) 575-8470 · Fax: (870) 575-4645 · Email: chancellor@uapb.edu

www.uapb.edu/chancellor

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WHITE HALL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 27

1020 West Holland Avenue
White Hall, Arkansas 71602-9632
Phone 870-247-2002
Fax 870-247-3707

DR. LARRY SMITH
Superintendent

BILL MITCHELL
Assistant Superintendent

DOROTHY WELCH
Assistant Superintendent

HEATH BENNETT
Assistant Superintendent

August 31, 2015

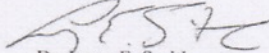
Dr. Mary Benjamin, Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs
The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
1200 North University Drive Mail Slot 4971
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Dear Dr. Benjamin,

The White Hall School District is proud to lend our support to your efforts to secure a Regional Workforce Development Grant. We have a vested interest in increasing the availability of high quality and innovative STEM educational opportunities both for our students, teachers and for our community. Improvement in this area is truly a "win-win" scenario.

The White Hall School District firmly supports the connection of ADE, ADHE, Local Districts and community employers and is confident that this program will be invaluable to our community.

Sincerely,



Dr. Larry E. Smith
Superintendent



Dollarway School District

Administration

Patsy A. Hughey
Ed. S.
Superintendent

•
Dr. Melvin Bryant
Asst. Superintendent

•
Barbara Boyce
LEA Supervisor

Schools

•
James Matthews
Elementary
Principal
Dianne Boyd Emelife
870-534-0726

•
Townsend Park
Elementary
Principal
Dr. Ernestine Roberts
870-534-4185

•
Dollarway Middle
School
Principal
Yolanda Prim
870-534-5243

•
Dollarway High
School
Principal
Jeff Spalletta
870-534-3878

August 31, 2015

To Whom It May Concern :

As Superintendent of the Dollarway Public Schools, I am in support of the grant. I am looking forward to becoming a partner and working together.

Sincerely

Patsy A. Hughey

Patsy A. Hughey,
Superintendent
Dollarway Public Schools