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Montana's Headwaters Technology Hub Submits \$75 Million Phase II Grant Application

HELENA, Mont.—The Headwaters Technology Hub (HTH), a broad regional consortium of private, public, and academic partners submitted a Phase II application for Hub implementation on February 29th. The Montana application is in response to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Economic Development Administration's Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs competition, established as a result of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. Montana was one of 31 regions nationwide to be designated a Regional Tech Hub and was awarded a \$500,000 planning grant in October 2023. Funds for the current competition come from the \$500 million FY2023 Congressional appropriation to launch the program.

The HTH is seeking \$75 million in federal funding, leveraging private and state investment to advance technologies in photonics-based sensing and autonomous systems. Montana is a global innovation leader in these technologies and securing additional U.S. federal government investment will help the region's tech sector develop additional commercial applications in agriculture, critical resource management, construction, and national defense.

"I'm extremely proud of Montana's Headwaters Tech Hub application," said Executive Director and Regional Innovation Officer of the HTH, Tim VanReken. "The collaboration we have seen among stakeholders all over the region is unprecedented and there's no doubt it's going to make EDA take notice. By securing this funding, the Headwaters Tech Hub will be positioned to make major advancements in the technologies needed to protect our country and bolster our ability to meet the challenges of the future."

"This grant has the potential to elevate Montana to a position of prominence as a global leader in advanced technologies, fostering an environment ripe with entrepreneurial opportunities. It aims to catalyze the growth, recruitment, and expansion of businesses within Montana, ultimately contributing to the creation of high-quality, good-paying jobs," said Todd O'Hair, President & CEO of the Montana Chamber of Commerce.

The Headwaters Technology Hub creates tangible reasons for companies to invest in our region and fuels the need for additional workforce skills for the future. Altogether this creates new opportunities for rural and underserved populations across Montana and the adjoining region.

"Montana is uniquely positioned to secure this funding from the U.S. EDA," said Paul Green, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. "Montana is already a global leader in photonics and sensors. This EDA grant would signal confidence in Montana's ability to significantly contribute to our nation's national defense and economic security."

Montana's existing optics and photonics center of excellence has a renowned track record and strong relationships with global industry leaders, and dozens of startups and spin-out companies that seeded an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Optical Technology Center (OpTeC)

at Montana State University and the Montana Photonics & Quantum Alliance have proof of concept and now it's time to scale the great work being done in collaboration with state-wide and regional partners from education, industry, and government.

“Montana University System institutions conduct research that not only presses forward important boundaries of scientific understanding but is also vital to the growth of innovative companies and high-paying jobs in Montana,” said Clayton Christian, Montana Commissioner of Higher Education. “Federal investment in the Headwaters Tech Hub will allow us to launch and expand new educational pathways that lead to good jobs in Montana’s growing high-tech industries.”

SUPPORT FROM MONTANA’S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The consortium applauds the bipartisan support from Montana’s federal delegation members, Senator Jon Tester (D), Senator Steve Daines (R) and Congressman Ryan Zinke (R).

Senator Jon Tester

“Bringing jobs back to the United States, securing our domestic supply chains, reducing our dependence on China, and developing next-generation technology right here at home remains critically important to our future,” said Senator Jon Tester. “That’s why I am thrilled to see the work happening at the Headwaters Tech Hub, and why I stand in strong support of their application for the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) Tech Hubs Program Phase 2 implementation grant.”

Senator Steve Daines

“Montana is leading in the nation thanks to cutting-edge technology, groundbreaking research, and a skilled workforce. I’m glad to see my bill, the CHIPS and Science Act, help boost Montana tech, innovation, and jobs. With this grant, the Headwaters Tech Hub will continue to grow jobs in Montana and keep Montana at the forefront of research and innovation.”

Congressman Ryan Zinke

“Montana is already a global leader in some of the most important technology used by our national security and defense professionals, and federal funding for the Headwaters Tech Hub will help grow the industry and spur high-tech job growth and rural development. I’m excited to support the Montana Chamber and local businesses making the Headwaters a reality and will use my position on the appropriations committee to fight for full funding of the project.”

Consortium Members of the Headwaters Tech Hub

Accelerate MT (LEAD APPLICANT)

America's Frontier Fund

Aurora Technologies

Bridger Photonics

Butte Local Development Corporation

Grand Farm

Homestake Venture Partners

Hyundai America Technical Center, Inc. (HATCI) / New Horizons Studio (NHS)

John Deere

Missoula Economic Partnership

Montana Chamber of Commerce

Montana Department of Commerce

Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Montana Office of Commissioner of Higher Education

Montana Office of Indian Affairs

Montana Photonics & Quantum Alliance

Montana State Tribal Economic Development Commission

Montana State University

Montana State Workforce Innovation Board (SWIB)

Montana Technology University

Next Frontier Capital

Prospera

RDO Equipment Co.

Reveal Tech

Salish Kootenai College

University of Montana

Vision Aerial

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