AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

Agenda Item: Ratification of Correspondence; Western State Colo

Action Requested: Motion

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:

The attached was distributed on 8/8/16.

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: Katherine Haase **Submitter's Email Address:** khaase@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reveiwed by: Discharge Date: Certificate of Insurance Required

Yes ○ No ○

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 8/10/2016

◉ Consent Agenda ○ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 0

Agenda Date: 8/16/2016

Revised April 2015

Gunnison County
COLORADO

GUNNISON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Phone: (970) 641-0248, Fax: (970) 641-3061
Email: bocc@gunnisoncounty.org
Website: www.GunnisonCounty.org

August 8, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

Gunnison County respectfully supports the grant for the Western State Colorado University (WSCU) Icehouse, a strategic initiative that aims to improve the economy and enhance entrepreneurship in the Gunnison Valley.

Due to the closure of the Oxbow Coal Mine and the significant slowdown of a second coal mine in the northwest corner of Gunnison County during the last two years, our region has been struggling to recover from the recession. In 2014, community leaders from local municipalities, the County, and major employers came together to work towards a more prosperous future; together they formed the Community Builders Task Force and initiated a significant public engagement process called the One Valley Prosperity Project (OVPP) to implement specific strategies and actions to improve the economic prosperity of our residents. This project was financially supported by each of the local governmental partners, the Sonoran Institute, and the Department of Local Affairs through a planning grant.

In addition, Gunnison and Delta Counties received an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to develop specific strategies based on sound economic trends and market opportunities to improve our economic resiliency. Through coordination of the analytical work from the EDA grant and the OVPP community engagement process, we discovered a diverse set of creative entrepreneurs working in our valley. We also learned from many modest entrepreneurs that, with a little help, connection to capital, and/or other technical resources, they could more successfully bring their ideas to the market place. Examples of our entrepreneurs include:

- Software engineers for phone applications;
- A playground equipment designer and manufacturer who exports their final product internationally;
- An engineer who has created a lining product that has applications for protecting truck beds and holding liquid material safely for mining and industrial applications; and
- A unique sign developer that exports their product to large casinos around the world.

The WSCU School of Business entrepreneurial program, which created a community laboratory for students that also reaches out into the community to support entrepreneurs, presented the idea for the Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurial (ICE) Project to OVPP. The proposal includes both a physical place (ICEhouse) and a variety of programs to connect entrepreneurs to human and financial resources so that they can convert entrepreneurial ideas into businesses. Additionally, it will provide a creative co-working space for entrepreneurs and include a specific technological niche (still being refined) where a specific idea could rapidly move to the market place. The collective programs of the ICE Project will create more successful entrepreneurs within and attract new business endeavors to our valley, and the concept has been embraced by the OVPP. The Innovation Center of the Rockies will act in cooperation with officials from the County to ensure the successful launch of the project.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this high-leverage strategic action and top priority in our newly developed economic strategy, which will be matched by a significant investment from WSCU via the facility and the contributions of highly creative faculty members.

Paula Swenson, Chairperson | Phil Chamberland, Commissioner | Jonathan Houck, Commissioner

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