

The Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance: A strategic partnership

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Agriculture, technology and education sectors in Hood River County and the Mid-Columbia propose a strategic partnership to address opportunities and challenges specific to each industry through a common focus on agriculture. Capital investment by State of Oregon, as supported by Sen. Thomsen, will be instrumental to this project.

ATEA will be an economic ecosystem centered on an “innovation farm” and program of study at Hood River Valley High School and Columbia Gorge Community College. Agricultural and technology sectors partner with entrepreneurs to help agricultural producers remain competitive amid challenges arising from climate change, workforce disruption and global competition.

The goal is to ensure the continuation of family farming in Hood River County and the Mid-Columbia region by equipping new generations with the knowledge, skills and hands-on learning to succeed in the business of farming.

ATEA embraces these elements:

Program of agricultural study: A dual credit high school program leading to degree or certificate at Columbia Gorge Community College with ability to transfer to four-year institutions for continuing education. College courses also provide opportunity for the incumbent workforce to gain new skills needed for advancement in agricultural careers.

Innovation farm: An active, commercial farm that will expand the region’s capacity to produce locally-sourced fruits, vegetables and specialty crops while providing students with opportunity to apply their knowledge in a working farm. Current and emerging agricultural technologies will be integrated into the production model, both to enhance year-round agricultural production and also to test new technologies in a real-world setting. Property owned by Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District may be acquired and dedicated for this purpose, or other property identified.

Strategic dialog: ATEA’s strategic partners will work together to:

- Identify entrepreneurial opportunities where technologies may be applied to resolve agricultural challenges.
- Ensure that the agricultural curriculum remains relevant in a constantly-changing world
- Inform best management practices of the innovation farm
- Provide technical support and access to capital for agri-tech entrepreneurs
- Engage young people and build enthusiasm for the future of farming in the Hood River Valley and throughout the Mid-Columbia region

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