

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2023

Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director
U.S. National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Director Panchanathan:

We write in support of the University of Nevada (UNR) and collaborators' grant application to the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Regional Innovation Engines program. UNR and its collaborators are joining to create the Intermountain Region Integrated Ecosystem (IRIE) for Critical Battery Materials Supply Chain, Sustainable Battery Technologies, and Economic Prosperity.

Support from the NSF would help create a center of excellence to strengthen U.S. technological and manufacturing leadership in the sustainable battery economy. The center will work to establish a stable domestic supply chain of critical battery materials and an innovation hub to foster the development of new battery technologies. Furthermore, it will help develop a diverse, skilled workforce to enhance the economic growth of underdeveloped small towns, rural communities, and metropolitan areas in the intermountain west of the U.S. The many companies exploring resources and opportunities for development are fragmented and would benefit from a strong private-public-academic partnership and centralized development of technology and workforce.

Our national transition to clean energy depends on the development of domestic energy storage technologies; that storage capacity is currently reliant on lithium-ion batteries (LIBs). LIBs will play an integral role in day-to-day community operations ranging from transportation electrification to emerging fields such as aviation and space technology. For example, it is estimated that there will be 54 million electric vehicles (EVs) worldwide by 2040, compared to 6.5 million in 2020. Currently, there is only one domestic producer of lithium in the United States, and it is located in rural Nevada.

As we have seen in the Silver State, this consortium of forward-thinking entities led by smart, talented, and driven entrepreneurs are coordinating in this NSF competition with an effective effort intended to meet the goals you have set out for the Regional Innovation Engines program: advance critical technologies; address national and societal challenges; foster partnerships across industry, academia, government, nonprofits, civil society, and communities of practice; promote and stimulate economic growth and job creation; and spur regional innovation and talent.

We support measures that lead to private-public-academic partnerships and centralize development of technology and workforce and hope that you will give the application from UNR and their collaborators your full and fair consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us or our staff.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senate



Jacky Rosen
United States Senate