



February 23, 2009

Jack Price
Economic Development Administration
111 North Canal Street, Suite 855
Chicago, Illinois 60606-7204

Re: Letter in Support of the Wisconsin BioAg Gateway

Dear Mr. Price,

Thrive, the regional economic development enterprise for the eight-county Madison Wisconsin region, is writing this letter in support of the BioAg Gateway Project proposed for our region.

Thrive's work focuses on target sector development: agriculture, biotechnology and healthcare. Our focus on these sectors was chosen because we are already very strong in this region in each sector. In fact, Wisconsin's bioscience employment is growing faster than the U.S. average in three of four major categories (Batelle, June 2008).

Wisconsin's tech and science work force (now ranked 14th from 20th in 2004) and our risk capital and entrepreneurial infrastructure (now ranked 16th v. 32nd four years ago) are both dramatically on the rise, according to the recent Milken Institute Report, 2008. We have seen strong increases in employment across the ag feedstock, chemicals, and drugs and pharmaceuticals sectors.

We have a very strong food science industry in the region; the presence of the University Wisconsin-Madison and its internationally renowned food science department continues to draw businesses worldwide to the region.

Finally, we are a region (and an organization) that places a strong emphasis on sustainability. From the eco-municipalities around our region to clean technologies spinning out of the UW and the bio-energy plants dotting our region, sustainability and quality of life is a priority for our region. Wisconsin companies are already investing in sustainability through wind, solar, biofuels, bioproducts, methane digestion systems and more. Locating the BioAg Gateway here would only strengthen that commitment and our resources toward that commitment.

As a region, we are known as a wellspring of innovation. The National Science Foundation reported recently that Wisconsin was 16th among all states in science and engineering doctorates award, 22nd in S&E doctorates employed; 19th in science and engineering and health post-docs; and 20th in SE&H graduate students. With strong assets like the University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Alumni Research

Foundation (WARF), the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center (GLBRC), and the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery/Morgridge Institute for Research (WID/MIR) we have a unique ability to connect the research and ideas coming out of these organizations and commercializing and incubating businesses.

As our incubated businesses expand, we have the regional resources to take them to scale—for example, in areas like DeForest, with its concentration of bio-ag companies, or the Renewable Energy Park being discussed in Jefferson County.

This is directly in line with our organization's focus on creating and growing our own businesses, a strategy that is embraced by the region as we work collaboratively to grow the region's economy in ways that preserve and enhance our quality of life. This project is a great opportunity at the intersection of economic vitality and quality of life with a strong opportunity for business and job creation.

In short, our strong biotech and agriculture industries, workforce and support systems would be a boon for the BioAg Gateway, just as locating the BioAg Gateway here would in turn positively impact our already strong biotechnology and agriculture sectors. We support this project very strongly.

Sincerely,



Rafael Carbonell
Executive Vice President, Thrive
<http://www.thrivehere.org>