

USDA Awards \$470,800 Grant to Maryland's Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center

This grant supports its funding opportunity to establish the Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Demonstration Center

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) announced the approval for a \$470,800, two-year long grant by the [United States Department of](#)

[Agriculture](#) (USDA). This grant funding award is in support of establishing the Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center (CAIC) on Maryland's Eastern Shore with the long-term goal of creating a "national hub" for the development of innovation and new technologies in agriculture and aquaculture.



The CAIC and its preceding programs are intended to be a program that enables the applied commercialization of innovations and technologies of value-added products that respond to real-world problems and challenges, helping to increase yields, improve the food supply chain, and generate new markets and revenue streams, all of which address the need of 56% more food by 2050 for a growing and more affluent global population.

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Mike Thielke

ESEC is a private sector, nonprofit organization serving the eight rural counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore. ESEC's

mission is to provide technical assistance, programs, and other services that are targeted toward high-growth, innovative, and scalable entrepreneurs, innovators, and startups. One of ESEC's principal initiatives is the F3 (Farm · Fish · Food) Tech Accelerator program, which has an industry

sector focus on agriculture and aquaculture. The F3 Tech Accelerator builds upon the region's traditional industries of agriculture and seafood, elevating them through the use of innovation and technology, increasing yields, creating jobs, and generating wealth and economic prosperity throughout the region. Since 2017, ESEC's ambition has been to provide the same kind of technical assistance and scalable opportunities to value-added producers that they already provide to more tech-oriented [agritech](#) and [aquatech](#) businesses.

"We are extremely proud and grateful to be representing Maryland as one of the three winners of this national competition put on by the USDA," stated Mike Thielke, executive director of the F3 Tech Accelerator and its parent organization, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center. "Maryland's agricultural industry is thriving and we're looking forward to using this investment from the USDA as a chance to expand the use of innovation to feed and better serve our communities."

The approved grant funds will be used for a plethora of action items, including but not limited to consulting services for legal, accounting, and technical services to be used by the recipient for the purpose of establishing and operating the Center, hiring the Center's employees, along with making grants to agricultural producers.

About Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created to help advance an entrepreneurship ecosystem on Maryland's Eastern Shore. This includes the counties of Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester. ESEC has two initiatives currently underway that are part of an overall strategy to encourage the organic development of high-growth, innovative, and scalable businesses and the jobs they create, with an emphasis on the region's traditional industries of agriculture and seafood — hotDesks and F3 Tech Accelerator.

HotDesks is a network of coworking spaces that serves the needs of entrepreneurs and innovators throughout the Eastern Shore. Through programs and events targeted to innovative, high growth, and scalable startups, hotDesks helps connect the Eastern Shore with the rest of the statewide innovation and startup ecosystem in the Baltimore/Washington corridor.

F3 Tech Accelerator advances innovation and technology in the sectors of agriculture, aquaculture, and the environment. Through a pipeline of programs targeted to idea, early-stage, and scalable startups, participating F³ Tech organizers and partners strive to position Maryland as a nationally-recognized leader in agritech, aquatech, and envirotech.

For more information, please visit Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center's website: <https://ventureahead.org/>.

ABOUT USDA'S RURAL BUSINESS-COOPERATIVE SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Rural Business-Cooperative Service offers

programs to help businesses grow as well as job training for people living in rural areas. Its programs help provide the capital, training, education and entrepreneurial skills that can help those living in rural areas start and grow businesses or find jobs in agricultural markets and in the bio-based economy. USDA and our public and private partners are connecting rural residents to the global economy by supporting business growth and development, assisting with creating wealth and supporting rural America, improving the effectiveness of programs serving cooperatives, creating and keeping jobs through recreation as well as restoring, conserving and managing rural America's natural resources, and bringing fast internet to more homes and businesses. These investments support America's long-term prosperity by ensuring that our rural communities are able to take care of themselves, grow and prosper.

Evan Sneider
Red Rooster PR
+1 954-673-6835
[email us here](#)

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