

TO: Supervisor Glenn Church, Supervisor Luis Alejo

CC: Richard Vaughn, Monterey County Economic Development Committee

FROM: Salinas Valley AgTech Alliance

RE: Request for FY26 Support for Salinas Valley AgTech Alliance & Reservoir Farms Launch

Overview

The Salinas Valley AgTech Alliance brings together Hartnell College, The Reservoir, Digital NEST, Rancho Cielo, Mujeres en Acción, and over a dozen major employers and growers to tackle a generational opportunity: to make Salinas the global hub for agricultural automation while building a stronger, more inclusive economy for Monterey County.

What's new is the scale and alignment of this effort. With \$3M already committed for 2025—including \$895K from the State of California via Uplift Central Coast and \$1.9M in private investment—we are positioned to launch *Reservoir Farms*, the world's first on-farm robotics incubator, in Salinas this August at the corner of Highway 68 and Hitchcock Road. This project is already catalyzing private sector involvement from industry leaders like Western Growers and Tanimura & Antle, while anchoring inclusive workforce efforts led by Hartnell and community partners.

Why It Matters to Monterey County

Despite being a global ag powerhouse, Monterey County faces a serious mismatch: a majority of local jobs are low quality, and most of our homegrown technical talent leaves for jobs elsewhere. The Salinas Valley AgTech Alliance will change that by creating and supporting local startup companies and local high-road careers. Over the next five years, the Alliance will support 50+ startups, create 500+ new jobs, engage 1,000+ students in AgTech, and drive over \$100M in capital investment.

The Request

We respectfully request that the County match either the \$1.9M in private commitments or the \$895K in state funding already secured for 2025. County support will:

- Enable the August opening of Reservoir Farms and the expansion of Hartnell-led programming
- Demonstrate strong local commitment as we pursue additional state and federal support
- Fund critical planning, permitting, and implementation needs not covered elsewhere
- Signal to the private sector that Monterey County is serious about AgTech and the future of farm jobs

With County partnership, we can establish Salinas as the global center for AgTech and create long-term, upwardly mobile job pathways for Monterey County residents.

We appreciate your continued leadership and look forward to further conversation.

In alliance,

Dr. Jackie Cruz, Hartnell College
Danny Bernstein, The Reservoir
Jacob Martinez, Digital NEST
Chris Devers, Rancho Cielo
Maria Elena Manzo, Mujeres en Acción