**For Immediate Release**
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**Application period now open for EAST grant funding**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (Aug. 31, 2023) – The EAST Initiative on Thursday announced the opening of the 2024-2025 EAST recruiting season for consideration in awarding the Department of Secondary Education/Arkansas Department of Education-EAST Grant.

 Startup funding is available for more than 10 new EAST programs for the 2024-2025 school year. Funding from the grant will cover technology needed to install a full EAST classroom environment, and will cover some professional development that is required in the EAST curriculum. Arkansas schools considering implementation of EAST in the next school year should fill out the form found at <https://news.eastlink.me/nextstep>. Applications will be accepted until December 15.

 “EAST is excited about the opportunity to grow our network and to continue expanding the capacity of students and leaders to work together in finding solutions beyond school walls,” EAST Chief Executive Officer Matt Dozier said. “Students are better prepared to succeed beyond the school walls when provided the opportunities to demonstrate their innovative ideas as practical reality. It goes beyond volunteering. EAST truly is education accelerated through service and technology.”

 During the 22-23 school year, EAST programs:

* Collaborated with 1,285 community partners for more than 17,990 volunteer hours;
* Realized an estimated economic impact statewide of more than $461,620 dollars through those volunteer hours;
* And trained more than 7,610 students through 110 unique training opportunities both online and in-person.

 EAST students are engaged and excited about learning, Dozier said, pointing to data recently released by the Arkansas-based nonprofit. In a survey of more than 3,400 students across 42 schools, data showed that the EAST experience is 22% more engaging than other core courses. The survey was conducted through a tool called the Wellington Engagement Index (WEI). Created by educators, WEI was designed to measure student engagement, and to give administrators and teachers opportunities for reflection as they challenge students to solve real problems in their communities.

 “Thanks to generous funding opportunities provided by DESE, EAST will continue to grow,” Dozier said. “Arkansas students will have access to the tools and technology needed to solve the challenges of today.”

 If you need assistance or have questions that need immediate attention, please reach out to Tami Baker with EAST at 501-472-7852 or tami@eaststaff.org.

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**About EAST:** EAST is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Little Rock. Greenbrier High School first offered EAST in 1996; EAST now has programs in more than 250 schools across four states. Through EAST, students are encouraged to think critically and innovate to create positive change in their communities with the technology EAST provides for their classrooms. EAST offers year-round training to students; and professional development for EAST educators and for all classroom teachers through Education Unleashed. To learn more about EAST, visit [**www.eastinitiative.org**](http://www.eastinitiative.org/).