

**West Virginia Coalition for Technology Based Economic Development**

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Contact: Anne Barth (304) 444-2918

**TechConnectWV Awards $10,000 to Aither Chemicals LLC**

TechConnectWV today announced a $10,000 technical assistance award to Aither Chemicals, a West Virginia firm in the business of building commercial plants to develop petrochemicals derived from ethane extracted from the Marcellus and Utica Shales. The award will support an independent review of the Aither process design and economic analysis, enabling the firm to strengthen its market position.

In announcing the award, TechConnectWV Executive Director Anne Barth said, “TechConnectWV is pleased to assist Aither, an innovative start-up with great potential for creating and retaining jobs in West Virginia.”

Barth added that several member organizations of TechConnectWV have united to support Aither, demonstrating the group’s mission to create jobs by connecting entrepreneurs and start-up firms with R&D assistance, access to capital, and other resources needed for the commercialization of products, services, and technologies.

Aither is a spinout from MATRIC, a nonprofit research institute which focuses on creating and commercializing innovations in chemical, energy and environmental technologies. Recently, the West Virginia Jobs Investment Trust (WVJIT) finalized a deal to invest $250,000 in Aither. In addition to MATRIC and WVJIT, other TechConnectWV members have helped Aither by making key contacts, offering strategic advice, and identifying feedstock sources.

“This is the type of public-private partnership that leads to success in the innovation economy,” Barth added.

Aither uses a proprietary, integrated process for creating chemical products derived from ethylene. Aither's process is designed to work economically at the same scale, or on a smaller scale, with less start-up costs than traditional steam cracker plants and with reduced environmental emissions.

“We will use West Virginia’s natural gas resources to produce ethane-based products near the source of the raw material,” said Aither CEO Leonard Dolhert. “With Aither as a local provider, West Virginia’s chemical companies will be able to reduce shipping costs in their supply chain.”

Earlier this month, TechConnectWV released the West Virginia Chemicals and Advanced Materials Blueprint, a detailed strategy for growth in the state’s chemicals and advanced materials industry cluster. “Aither is an excellent example of how we can collaborate and utilize existing assets to support job creation in West Virginia, as outlined in the Blueprint,” Barth said.

TechConnectWV is a non-profit coalition with broad representation from private industry, the public sector, and higher education. TechConnectWV works to enhance awareness, spur collaboration, and raise the discussion of issues surrounding technology-based economic development. Its goals are to diversify the state’s economy, promote economic prosperity, and create high-paying jobs. For more information, visit [www.techconnectwv.com](http://www.techconnectwv.com).

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