



NORTHWEST FLORIDA BEACHES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) Announces Strategic Partnership with Florida State University's InSPIRE Initiative

Panama City, FL – December 18, 2024 – Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) is pleased to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Florida State University's Institute for Strategic Partnerships, Innovation, Research, and Education (InSPIRE). The MOU was officially signed today at the ECP Board Meeting, marking the beginning of a transformative partnership aimed at advancing aerospace engineering, testing, and manufacturing in the region.

This collaboration will establish ECP as the home of InSPIRE's advanced manufacturing and aerospace facilities, which will include one of the largest and most advanced hypersonic wind tunnels offered by any university in the nation. The selection of ECP for this initiative's location was an important decision with impacts to regional economic development, job creation, and technological innovation.

"We are thrilled to partner with Florida State University to bring a hub of cutting-edge innovation to Bay County," said Mark Sheldon, Chair of the Airport Board of Directors. "The establishment of InSPIRE at ECP will make our region a leader in aerospace and advanced manufacturing research and with it create high-wage jobs and educational opportunities for the region."

InSPIRE is dedicated to fostering research excellence and innovation through strategic partnerships with industry leaders, government agencies, and academic institutions. This partnership with ECP furthers InSPIRE's mission to drive innovation and leading-edge research that supports industry partners' requirements and serves the community's needs.

In April, Triumph Gulf Coast gave the final sign-off on \$98.4 million in grant funding that will support the project.

FSU will invest another \$65 million over the next 10 years and has committed to securing more than \$235 million in grant funding.

“We look forward to working closely with partners throughout the community to help bring our collective vision of a thriving innovation ecosystem to life,” said Stacey Patterson, FSU VP for Research. “The development of unique facilities will attract aerospace and defense industries and will create quality career paths that ultimately benefit the entire Northwest Florida region.”

The signing of the MOU is a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to enhance the economic and technological landscape of Northwest Florida. ECP and FSU InSPIRE are committed to working together to achieve shared goals and create a future where research and innovation have a profound, sustainable impact on society.

For more information about the partnership and upcoming initiatives, please visit [FSU InSPIRE](#).

About Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport

[Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport \(ECP\)](#) is located less than 30 minutes from Panama City Beach, Panama City, and the beaches of South Walton. Today, with service from American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, and United Airlines, ECP’s airline partners provide daily flights to worldwide destinations, including year-round and seasonal nonstop flights between ECP and Atlanta (ATL), Austin (AUS) Baltimore (BWI), Charlotte (CLT), Chicago (MDW/ORD), Dallas (DAL/DFW), Denver (DEN), Houston (HOU/IAH), Indianapolis (IND), Kansas City (MCI), Nashville (BNA), St. Louis (STL), Washington DC (DCA), and more. ECP provides Northwest Florida with first-class facilities and was strategically developed for major economic development opportunities. ECP is the gateway to visitors seeking Northwest Florida’s famous beaches.

About InSPIRE

[The Institute for Strategic Partnerships, Innovation, Research, and Education](#) launched with an initial grant from Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. InSPIRE is helping FSU fuel the regional innovation economy and will serve as a beacon to attract investment and opportunity to the region. The InSPIRE initiative includes not only applied research, advanced manufacturing and aerospace testing and prototyping facilities but also funds dedicated to increasing the number of engineering graduates. InSPIRE is also committed to STEM outreach and development of K-20 students and teachers to build

the workforce talent needed to serve the high-speed aerodynamics and advanced manufacturing industries.