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Office of the Principal Chief

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EXECUTIVE ORDER
2026-08-CTH

Executive Order Establishing the Principal Chief's Task Force on Youth Agriculture Education

1. **AUTHORITY:** The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation

2. **POLICY:** It is in the interest of the Cherokee Nation to encourage and develop Cherokee Nation youth in the area of agriculture education. Agriculture remains a major driver of the economy in and around the Cherokee Nation reservations. A range of employment opportunities exists and will exist in the coming decades, with skills ranging from relatively conventional farm and ranch skills to STEM-based skills. Across the United States, the agricultural workforce is aging, increasingly demanding more highly skilled workers and is impacted by policies in area such as immigration and climate change. These factors mean that a generation of replacement workers, now school-aged children, must be to be ready to go to work equipped with solid foundations in the management of agricultural systems in the 21st century[1]. Many aspects of agriculture align with Cherokee Nation culture, including themes of sustainability. The success of agriculture is also tied to the success of countless Cherokee Nation communities. Cherokee Nation's Sequoyah Schools as well as the Language Immersion school operate elements of agriculture education. Language has developed culturally-rooted agriculture practices directly into curriculum and into Cherokee cultural ceremonial education. Sequoyah Schools has a young but very promising Ag program, though it lacks sufficient facilities to operate on par with other schools in the region. More development of agriculture education can result in greater career development opportunities for a significant number of young Cherokees. Cherokee Nation's relationship with

[1] For example, though the overall U.S. agriculture industry's workforce is expected to contract by 2% over the next decade, highly-skilled agriculture and food science jobs are expected to grow by twice the average of all other workers during that same time period. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Outlook Handbook (2025-2035): Agriculture and Food Scientists," https://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/agricultural-and-food-scientists.htm, retrieved September 18, 2027.

more than 100 school districts in and around the Cherokee Nation reservation also presents opportunities to positively impact agricultural education across the broader population of students in K-12 public schools. Even when K-12 students do not pursue post secondary education or careers in agricultural fields, K-12 agriculture is of intrinsic value to the students, their families and to the larger society and we collectively maintain a connection to food and natural resources. These interests and opportunities demand the development of strategies to improve agriculture education. Accordingly, the "Principal Chief's Task Force on Youth Agriculture Education" is warranted.

3. **Principal Chief's Task Force on Youth Agriculture Education:** There is hereby established the Principal Chief's Task Force on Youth Agriculture Education, alternatively known as the Principal Chief's Ag-Ed Task Force.

    a. **Composition:** The ***Principal Chief's Task Force on Youth Agriculture Education*** shall be composed of the following members:

        i. Corey Bunch, Chief of Staff, (Chair)
        ii. Rex Jordan (Co-Chair)
        iii. Christina Justice, Secretary of Natural Resources (or her designee)
        iv. Howard Paden, Secretary of Language and Culture (or his designee)
        v. Terry Heustis, Superintendent of Sequoyah Schools
        vi. Jenna Dupree, Agricultural Education Instructor, Sequoyah Schools
        vii. Ethan Green, Government Relations Specialist
        viii. Jonathan Asbill, Senior Advisor for Capital Planning
        ix. Bentley Gibson, SHS FFA Chapter President, Task Force Student Advisor

    The Task Force may request the assignment of such clerical and administrative assistance as necessary to perform its work. Additionally, the Task Force is generally authorized administrative expense funds available under the Public Health and Wellness Fund Act to fund its work, subject to approval of specific amounts.

    b. Objectives: By February 28, 2027, the Task Force should provide a written report that includes analysis and recommendations relating to the following:

        i. Assess the current state of agriculture education administered directly by Cherokee Nation

ii. Assess the current efforts, other than by directly administered programs and services, that Cherokee Nation supports agriculture education (ie, support of third parties).

iii. Identify opportunities to expand Cherokee Nation's direct provision of K-12 agriculture education over the next decade, including specific achievable goals in FY 27 and FY 28. These opportunities should include a recommendation for the construction of agriculture education facilities, accessible to Sequoyah and Language Immersion schools.

iv. Identify opportunities to expand Cherokee Nation's indirect support for agriculture education of K-12 students in and around the Cherokee Nation reservation.

v. Assess the viability of specific competitive college scholarship support of students pursuing agriculture-related degrees.

c. **Transparency**: Although the Task Force is an executive branch advisory group and not a public body within the meaning of the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act, its report shall be distributed to Cherokee Nation elected officials and to the general public within 45 days of said distribution.

4. **ORDER**: Principal Chief's Task Force on Youth Agriculture Education is hereby created to achieve the purposes and policies set forth in this order and expires on September 30, 2027.

5. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Order is effective immediately on this November 13, 2026.

Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation