

December 23, 2018

Nevada Department of Agriculture
405 South 21st Street
Sparks, NV 89431

Dear Interim Director Conrad,

As the Division Administrator for Plant Industry at the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA), I have had an opportunity to witness the diverse work that occurs at NDA and the talented people that make the department function. I'm looking forward to continuing that momentum and growing the Department further as the Director for NDA.

Although I've been with NDA for only one year, I have worked in the agriculture industry for over 15 years and in a leadership role for over 14 years. I have been successful in roles within private industry and government agencies because of my commitment to collaboration between government, private industry and non-profit entities and building long term relationships. Early in my career, I worked as a chemist in both the petro-chemical industry and wine industry which provides me with a knowledge base to understand the Consumer Equitability Division and Plant Industry Division at NDA. During my tenure with the University of Nevada, Reno Desert Farming Initiative, I had the pleasure of working with Washoe County School District to grow fresh vegetables for their school menus and summer programs. Because of this experience, I have an understanding of a small portion of the challenges that the Food and Nutrition Division faces working with local school districts. Also, during my year at NDA, I have come to understand the complete workings of the Plant Industry as well as other plant programs in the Western Region.

Experience has taught me that one of my greatest strengths lies in persuading diverse groups of people to work together towards a common goal. I have found that the most effective technique for developing enthusiasm is creating excitement and energy around a project by clearly communicating the potential of the project to address a department, industry, or public need. My results oriented personal philosophy and leadership style has been proven many times over in my career.

I thrive working in a team environment and I have been fortunate to enjoy tremendous cooperation working in agriculture throughout Nevada. I have the management skills and energy that the Nevada Department of Agriculture needs to address the challenges currently facing the Department. The year that I have spent with the Department has also given me valuable experience and perspective in understanding the current operations and building strong relationships with important stakeholders to ensure that the transition to a new administration is as smooth as possible. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how I can bring my experience to this position.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jennifer Ott

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Jennifer Ott

Experience

Administrator, Plant Industry Division January 2018 – Present
Nevada Department of Agriculture Sparks, NV

- Acts as the State Plant Regulatory Official
- Oversees all Plant programs in the state including Crops, Pesticides, Pathology, Entomology, Chemistry and Natural Resources; adheres to Department vision in consultation with other western states
- Provides updates on Plant Industry activities to the Director, Deputy Director, and the State Board of Agriculture
- Collaborates with multiple industries to spread awareness of federal programs as well as educate on state regulatory issues
- Recommends bi-annual Division budget for Legislative approval and manages the Division's resource within budget guidelines and regulations
- Manages human resources of the Division according to policies and procedures, works with the Department of Administration to enact human resource policies and penalties.
- Acts as the spokesperson for Nevada plant industry related media inquiries

Operations Director April 2013 – December 2017
University of Nevada, Reno Desert Farming Initiative Reno, NV

- Managed a statewide research and sales program that operates in two locations
- Managed over 6 separate agriculture projects with individual budgets ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000
- Prepared and supervised the annual financial budget and maintains monthly cash flow activities
- Created and lead the execution of both short term and long term strategic program goals
- Collaborated with industry and local, state and federal stakeholders to solicit new ideas which improve operational efficiency, reach new markets or expand product lines
- Networked at industry events to increase visibility resulting in 4 key industry partnerships
- Acted as a spokesperson and moderator for organization and stakeholder affairs
- Managed the communication between departments resulting in more effective organizational communication
- Liaised with executive management to keep organizational goals aligned
- Created opportunities that encouraged teamwork and cohesiveness amongst employees
- Monitored marketing activities across both social media and print platforms and approved all brand usages.
- Managed 5 annual events including educational events attended by up to 50 people and fundraising events attended by over 100 people
- Managed compliance to local, state and federal regulations for operations and safety

Business Development Consultant May 2011-April 013
Nevada Small Business Development Center Reno, NV

- Reviewed company operations to identify weaknesses leading to large-scale operational improvements that increased company revenues

- Assisted several start-up companies to develop financial and marketing plans for private funding proposals and loan documents leading to 3 companies receiving funding
- Led consulting efforts for over 10 businesses updating marketing strategies, working with designers for brand improvements and suggesting operational improvements
- Worked with existing companies to create company marketing materials that resulted in one company netting a major Northern Nevada contract

Director of Marketing and Technical Services April 2008-January 2011
 Enartis Vinquiry Winemaking Products and Services Windsor, CA

- Coordinated with the corporate office in Italy for project management of experimental technologies
- Worked with at least 2 clients per project on implementation and commercial-scale trials of new technologies and products
- Presented technical data at industry seminars in the western United States
- Supervised a staff of scientists to work together on developing new products
- Acted as a liaison between multiple company departments to execute successful product deliverables bringing about an increase in efficiency
- Developed and implemented the annual marketing plan with a budget of approximately \$750,000 annually
- Oversaw and managed transition to a new product brand accounting for 70% of company sales
- Worked with the Director of Sales to develop pricing strategies to reflect a bi-annual 2%-5% increase in product pricing
- Collaborated with international teams on selected marketing and sales projects with the goal of increasing domestic profitability
- Acted as the lead coordinator for opening two new satellite locations that increased revenues by 20%

Marketing Manager January 2004 – March 2008
 Vinquiry Laboratory, Inc. Windsor, CA

- Participated in the development of overall company strategy that doubled the company in size in 5 years.
- Developed, planned, and executed a nationwide schedule of full-day and partial-day educational seminars attended by 20-250 guests
- Worked as a liaison between the company and clients providing technical information packets on our services and supplies

Chemist June 2001 – January 2004
 Vinquiry Laboratory Inc. Windsor, CA

- Performed analytical tests using automated instruments such as HPLC, GC, GCMS, NIR, enzymatic methods, and other wet chemistry equipment
- Supervised areas within the laboratory to guarantee time and accuracy goals were being met
- Developed and validated over 8 analytical methods
- Wrote and audited standard operating procedures for ISO 17025 accreditation

Chemist Summer 1999 & Summer 2000
 Bayer Corporation-Petrochemical Division Baytown, TX

- Performed analytical tests on petrochemical products for the Quality Assurance/Control laboratory

Education

The University of Nevada, Reno
Master's in Business Administration

Reno, NV
Graduated May 2013

The University of Texas at Austin
Major: Chemistry

Austin, TX
Graduated May 2001

Other Experience

- Vice President of the NevadaGrown Board of Directors
- Member of the Nevada Farm Conference Planning Committee

Jennifer Ott

Additional Requirements:

1. Describe your experience in the food and agriculture industry.

I have been working in several different areas of the food and agriculture industry for over 15 years. In the last year, I have been working in a regulatory and leadership capacity as the Plant Industry Administrator for the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA). The role as Administrator is varied as it encompasses knowledge requirements for the agriculture industry, regulatory framework, management techniques and multi-sourced budgets.

Prior to my role at the Department of Agriculture, I led the creation and management of the Desert Farming Initiative (DFI) at the University of Nevada, Reno. This role required extensive budget experience as well as regulatory knowledge, knowledge of Nevada's farming industry and partnering with private companies, government agencies and non-profits in a variety of different sectors.

Earlier in my career, I worked in the California wine industry. This exposed me to a different aspect of the agriculture industry, post-harvest processing and instilled a deep knowledge of the science and creativity of winemaking. I began in the wine industry as a beverage chemist and ended my tenure as the Director for Marketing and Technical Services. Working my way up through a private company gave me experience in product development, product sales, industry education as well as an appreciation for the economic and logistical challenges faced by private industry.

2. Describe your experience in regulating food and agriculture.

Part of my regulatory experience in the Plant Industry Division at NDA is not only updating Nevada Administrative Codes (NAC), but also working with industry and the public to provide education on the laws that govern agriculture. Over the past year, I have led the Plant Industry team to change 5 NACs that are in various stages of adoption. I've participated in all aspects of the regulatory process, including reviewing regulations to determine those in need of revision, drafting regulatory language, amendment of regulatory language, the presentation of proposed regulations at regulatory workshops and adoption hearings as well as preparation for defending regulations before the Legislative Commission. I have also had the opportunity to present at several events in order to explain new regulations. As the Administrator for the Division, I also work with my team on regulatory actions and support their requests to uphold regulations, whether that comes in the form of industry education or regulatory actions.

As the manager for the Desert Farming Initiative, working with both state and federal regulations was necessary to satisfy grant conditions, maintain program accreditation, and assist local farmers with regulatory compliance. All three of these goals were vital to the success of DFI. Recordkeeping, training and constant review of new regulations were all important to the program. Under my leadership, we achieved food safety certification through the Good Agricultural Practices program as issued by NDA and safety requirements as required by large scale food distribution companies such as US Foods.

Prior to my experience at the University, I worked at a wine industry laboratory and fermentation supply company from 2001 to 2011. The laboratory applied for ISO 17025

accreditation and my role was to document all laboratory processes and to write standard operating procedures for all analytical methods.

In 2008, I received a promotion and assigned all responsibilities for marketing and technical services. Technical services included managing all research projects, customer interactions, consulting projects, and the importation of fermentation supplies from Europe. Importing fermentation supplies required documentation from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Homeland Security. I supervised the regulatory paperwork and communication for these agencies. It was also necessary to be aware of all regulations with the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) that applied to the wine industry as this was the agency that most heavily regulated the industry.

3. Describe your experience in applying policy.

The Department of Agriculture is where most of my policy experience comes from. As part of the leadership team at NDA, I have been involved with explaining and applying policy within my Division. It is my belief that policies should not be permanent, unchangeable documents, but instead they should be reviewed and evaluated regularly as the industry and attitudes change. Therefore, I have also been involved in identifying out-of-date policies or identifying areas where policies need to be created in order to improve cooperation amongst Divisions.

Policy directives from the Board of Agriculture or the Governor's Office are often broad in nature and effective implementation requires not only a deep understanding of the agriculture industry, but also an ability to effectively communicate potential challenges or barriers so that the policy makers can be fully informed of local and industry specific impacts in crafting their policies.

4. Describe your experience in public administration.

I have had 7 years of experience in public administration. From 2011 to 2013, I worked for the Nevada Small Business Development Center (NSBDC) while earning my Master's degree. I'm familiar with the differences in budgeting, record keeping and grant management that come along with public administration. I specifically worked with small business clients helping them improve operations or marketing plans under the business assistance program funded jointly by the Small Business Association (SBA) and the University of Nevada, Reno College of Business.

Beginning in 2013, I became the director for the Desert Farming Initiative. The funding for DFI originally came from a Housing and Urban Development grant. I was responsible for all construction funds with this grant and creating a business plan for long-term program funding. I operated 6 different grant programs as well as managed a revenue generating operation for long-term funding.

In January of 2018, I began at the Department of Agriculture which has provided experience in public administration on a state government level as opposed to federal guidelines with the SBA or higher education guidelines.

5. Describe your experience in accounting and/or fiscal management.

I have been responsible for budget management for over 14 years, starting with a fairly small marketing budget at a private company growing to oversee a \$7 million dollar budget within the Plant Industry at NDA. Because of my diversity of experience, I am able to manage the Plant Industry budget's multi-source revenue stream (federal, fee, and appropriations) and work with the Division to control spending. This past year, I had the opportunity to plan the Plant Industry budget for the next biennium which will help to accomplish our goals of increased state-wide services and support in growing sectors, including pesticide application, hemp and natural resource management.

While at the University, I was successful in procuring two types of USDA grants – Risk Management Agency Targeted States Program and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. In accordance with University policy on sponsored projects, I was responsible for the fiscal management and reporting of all grant activities. I tracked grant spending weekly and submitted reports prior to the deadline given.

My fiscal responsibilities across my work experience included preparing program budgets, tracking revenue for long-term program viability, tracking expenses and working with the accounting or fiscal teams to create reports and ensure proper receivables and payables programs.

6. Describe your experience in business administration.

From 2008 to 2011, I was the Director of Marketing and Technical Services which included a department of 12 employees. My responsibilities included all financial management for the department, ultimate accountability for all marketing decisions, oversight of research projects and employee supervision.

The financial management portion of the job included annual budgeting and reporting. I had final approval on all expenditures for the department and was responsible for reviewing monthly sales and expense reports. After the company was purchased in 2009, I also had additional fiscal responsibilities of reporting to the new corporate office in Italy. As the Director of the marketing department for the company, I approved all brand and advertising usages. This included hiring all consulting graphic designers and supervising the marketing manager to purchase advertising space and update the company website. I created the annual marketing plan which was approved annually by the CEO.

Because many of the research projects included customer trials, I was also given the responsibility for oversight of the research program. I interacted daily with the research staff in my department to make sure that industry partners and customers were communicating effectively in order to complete the research project. Once research was complete, the results would be evaluated by the Directors and CEO for next steps.

In 2011, I became a business consultant with the Nevada Small Business Development Center while pursuing my MBA. It was during this time that I worked with small businesses to evaluate their operations and marketing plans for improvements. I met with small business clients on a weekly basis to gain an understanding of their business operations and how to meet their revenue goals. I often had five clients at a time that were needing assistance in different areas including marketing, adherence to government regulations, expansion and contract negotiation.

7. *Describe your leadership philosophy.*

Below are what I believe to be the 5 most important characteristics of an effective leader:

- **Effective Communication:** I believe that you must encourage communication. This means not only facilitating communication among employees or across divisions, but also between agencies and industry. More often than not, frustration and mis-understanding of an issue comes from a lack of communication or communicating in a style that is not appropriate for the audience.
- **Approachability:** I believe that a leader must be available and approachable. It is important that the lead of an organization can be approached not only by staff at all levels, but by many individuals in the industry or government. Being open to diverse opinions and ideas, not only allows informed decision making based on all available inputs, it also allows you to solicit ideas from all levels and builds trust and credibility both inside and outside of the department. A willingness to listen is important to building a strong and lasting organization.
- **Consistency:** I believe that a leader must be consistent. Consistent vision and policies are key for employees and industry to understand guidelines and boundaries. Without consistency, employees and industries members can become disillusioned and frustrated by perceptions of special treatment or not understanding how an organization is run from day to day.
- **Accountability:** I believe that a leader must practice accountability. Practicing accountability means holding yourself and your subordinates responsible for the effective accomplishment of tasks, praising effectiveness and identifying and rectifying substandard performance.
- **Measurability:** I believe a leader must set goals, both long-term and short-term, that are measureable and achievable. It is very important for an organization to have a strategic plan to guide daily decisions. A strategic plan acts as a guiding outline making it possible to effectively react to opportunities or industry trends.

8. *Describe your supervisory background.*

I have been supervising staff for over 14 years – between 1 and 40 employees. I have supervised staff including Ph.D. scientists, industry professionals, program staff, administrative staff, and interns. My varied experience in supervision has taught me a lot about my own type of management style. I learned early on that employees are all different. Some employees desire more communication and oversight, while others prefer autonomy and independence. As a supervisor, it is important to have good communication with employees and learn the supervision preferences and adjust as much as you can or is appropriate to ensure a highly functioning division. Ultimately an effective supervisor will be able to adjust their supervisory style to the benefit of each employee.

Jennifer Ott
References:

Winnie Dowling
Assistant State Director
Nevada Small Business Development Center
[REDACTED]
Reno, NV 89557

Greg Mosier
Dean
University of Nevada, Reno, College of Business
[REDACTED]
Reno, NV 89511

Yvette Myers
Director of Outreach and Food Services
Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada
[REDACTED]
Reno, NV 89513

Rick Lattin
Owner and CEO
Lattin Farms
[REDACTED]
Fallon, NV 89406

Felipe Barrios, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Horticulture
Department of Agriculture, Nutrition and Veterinary Sciences
University of Nevada, Reno
[REDACTED]
Reno, NV 89557

[REDACTED]

Reference for Jennifer Ott from previous employment:

Marty Bannister
Owner/CEO (Retired)
Enartis Vinquiry

[REDACTED]