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New Mexico Economic Development Secretary Jon Barela announces \$42,000 for Four Community Commercial Kitchens and Technical Assistance for Five Communities to Develop Commercial Kitchens

Commercial Kitchen Initiative is Part of the Economic Development Department's Five-Year Plan to Support Rural Community Economic Diversification and Local Food Entrepreneurs

Santa Fe - Today, New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) Secretary Jon Barela joined Tim Nisly, Chief Executive Officer of the Rio Grande Community Development Corporation to announce that the Taos County Economic Development Center, Community Pantry in Gallup, Volunteer Center of Grant County and Northern New Mexico Food Hub in Espanola will each receive \$10,500 to support their community commercial kitchens. These kitchens were chosen for grants because they are currently operational or will be in the next 60 days.

"The agriculture and food production industries have been a significant part of our state economy for many generations and we are pleased to continue that heritage with our investment in commercial kitchens in rural communities throughout New Mexico," said Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Jon Barela. "The commercial kitchen initiative helps local farmers, artisan bakers and the like create jobs and bring about a sense of community and pride while growing the tax base."

Supporting rural community sustainability through the commercial kitchen initiative is a component of NMEDD's five-year plan for economic growth and diversification.

The five communities that will receive technical assistance to identify a sustainable business model for their startup kitchen projects are:

- Anton Chico
- Las Vegas
- Raton
- Los Pueblos in Ribera
- El Morro Valley Cooperative

The Economic Development Department will partner with the Rio Grande Community Development Corporation (RGCDC) to replicate the Mixing Bowl Community Kitchen Program, a national best-practice model, to build a network of community kitchens statewide. This initiative, known as La Cocina, will take the Mixing Bowl model statewide to support New Mexico's family entrepreneurs. By providing a system that supports the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of community members all across the New Mexico, the state has an opportunity to promote one of New Mexico's most unique assets - our food - to both support small businesses and build an export system that will create economic-base jobs.

"The RGCD is proud to partner with the New Mexico Economic Development Department to help La Cocina replicate the successful Mixing Bowl program here in New Mexico," said Tim Nisly, CEO of the RGCD. "We look forward to assisting these communities develop their value-added food production industry."

All nine communities will participate in the La Cocina network, which includes training and buyer events that open new markets to kitchen entrepreneurs.

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