

# Doña Ana County Report



Project Outcomes to Date

June 27, 2024

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## **Location**

Doña Ana County is one of 33 counties and the second largest in the state of New Mexico. With a population of more than 223,000 residents, the County comprises 3,814 miles. The City of Las Cruces, (county seat) sits on the edge of the Chihuahuan Desert. Located in the southern border region of the state, the County shares its borders with the State of Chihuahua, Mexico directly to the south; its western border with Luna County; its northern border with Sierra County; and portions of the eastern border with Otero County, and El Paso, Texas. The County intersects with Interstate-10 extending East to West, and Interstate-25 North to South. The Rio Grande River flows throughout its borders.

Known for its agricultural production of chile, onions, peppers and pecans, the County is also resident to local artists; a number of wineries, restaurants, museums, fairgrounds, casinos, and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peak National Monument, the White Sands National Monument, and the Fort Selden Historic Site, and in the north, Spaceport America.

## **Summary**

On September of 2023, the New Mexico Economic Development Department, Creative Industries Division, awarded Doña Ana County \$100,000 to implement a project focused on advancing and/or supporting creative industries. The County published a request for proposal on March 27, 2024, which was open until April 16, 2024. The Scope of work included: training staff that interact with county businesses and support economic development to integrate the creative industry into workflows and policy, create "micro" destinations with self-guided tours that integrate visual/public art & highlight culture and historic preservation, and create public art installations and wayfinding from Santa Teresa to Rincon.

Two proposals were received, and an evaluation committee was assembled, they met on April 29th along with the County's purchasing Department to review submissions and score them, Ms. Irene Oliver Lewis received the highest score. The Professional Services Agreement was approved by the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Irene Oliver Lewis has 47 years of experience in theatre arts, arts/cultural integration, humanities, and the creative industries. She has worked as a producer, director, actor, storyteller, creative dramatist, writer, arts advocate, arts educator/administrator, and community historian. As a performing artist, she has toured extensively across California, Florida, Arizona, Missouri, New York, Indiana, Washington DC, Texas, and New Mexico, as well as internationally in Scotland,

Japan, Korea, London, and Mexico. Ms. Lewis is a theatrical producer and consultant specializing in arts integration, humanities, creative industries, and theatre in both classroom and alternative spaces for universities, museums, public school districts, and small businesses. Her expertise lies in Latina and multicultural inclusion, humanities, and community engagement in arts, culture, and historic preservation projects, events, and themes.

In honor of New Mexico's Creative Industries Week, a Creativity Fest along with a symbolic project kickoff was planned for the week of June 3rd. The Doña Ana County Creativity Fest took place on Saturday June 8, 2024, at the Doña Ana County Government Center located at 845 N. Motel Blvd. Las Cruces NM 88007 from 10:00AM – 1:00PM. At 11:00AM the event welcome was conducted by three elected officials who spoke on the importance of the *Creative Industries* in Doña Ana County, Senator Jeff Steinborn, State Representative Reena Szczepanski and Doña Ana County Commissioner Shannon Reynolds (District 3).

Approximately 200 people participated in the activities, El Alazan food truck offered delicious burritos, quesadillas and cold drinks.

Artists and Creatives included:

- 1 **Daniel Aguilera:** Signage & Fabrication of Creative Industries signage
- 2 **Lisa Lopez & Wade McMahan:** Quantum Links Marketing LLC, Photography & Video
- 3 **Angela LaVere:** Between the Smiles Photo
- 4 **Horlando Lopez:** Singer/Musician
- 5 **Sal's Trio:** Music Trio
- 6 **Joshua Peugh:** Dark Circles Contemporary Dance
- 7 **Celeste Mendez:** Fine Art, Art Process and Images
- 8 **Robin Przybysz:** Art in Texture
- 9 **Brea Sargent:** Ink Dragon Concepts
- 10 **Lisa Stevens:** Fine Art & Painting
- 11 **Marina Vasconcellos:** Banana Birch Stickers
- 12 **Cecilia Vargas:** Curator and Arts Administrator
- 13 **Cruces Creatives:** a leader in the arts in Doña Ana County
- 14 **Amigos de Mesquite Street/Las Cruces Historic Preservation Commission**

Our journey has just begun, and we are thrilled about the opportunities that lie ahead. We eagerly anticipate the upcoming trainings designed to integrate the creative industry into workflows and policy, as well as the "micro" destinations featuring self-guided tours that will showcase visual and public art, highlighting culture and historic preservation. Additionally, we look forward to the public art installations and wayfinding projects from Santa Teresa to Rincon.

We remain committed to the project and are confident in our ability to achieve all objectives.

# Pictures

