

## City of Belen City of Belen Creative Industries Initiative

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Over the past three years, the City of Belen has been developing an initiative to enrich the local creative industries by supporting community building, economic development, and tourism enhancement in the Belen area. During that period, there was collaboration with more than 50 individuals and organizations committed to producing, supporting, and marketing the creative industries in Belen. Based on these collaborations, six strategies were identified for encouraging the growth of and supporting the expansion of Belen's creative industries. These strategies were implemented through the funding provided by this grant.

The following report describes these strategies and how they were implemented in the City of Belen and identifies the businesses and organizations that partnered with the Belen Creative Industries Initiative ("CII").

## **OVERVIEW OF BELEN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Between January and May of 2024, the Belen Creative Industries Initiative held a series of workshops, trainings, and meetings to educate entrepreneurs and promote economic development in the community.
- CII hired two high school student interns to engage in a variety of art-related activities.
- Four art instructors were hired to lead student art classes exposing students to various art forms.
- An IT consultant was hired to help participants solve technological issues, assist with website building, etc.
- A communication consultant was hired to guide entrepreneurs with marketing ideas and advertising.
- A networking system was created to enable exchanging information with entrepreneurs regarding upcoming economic opportunities.
- Infrastructure improvements were implemented in the Belen Arts & Cultural District.
  - Created wayfinding map of Arts & Cultural District
  - Aided in installation of kiosks to display maps
  - Created multiple opportunities and outdoor spaces for local artists and craftspeople to vend their wares
  - Worked with the City of Belen to upgrade indoor space for art and cultural activities
- An event promotion checklist was created for Belen Arts & Cultural District events.

## **LOCAL PARTNERS THAT PARTICIPATED IN CII ACTIVITIES AND PROMOTIONS**

City of Belen	Belen Harvey House Museum
Belen MainStreet Partnership	Greater Valencia County Chamber of Commerce
Belen Art League	Studio 508
Silver-Bar Studios	Silent T Productions
Smokal Smoke Local LLC	Books on Becker
H2 Academic Solutions	Valencia Co. Small Business Development Center
SouthWest Model Railroad Museum	Valencia County Business Incubator
New Mexico MainStreet	Paula Castillo, artist and educator
Belen Public Library	Valencia County Flying and Retrieval Society
Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area	New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
Friends of the Belen Public Library	Friends of the Belen Harvey House Museum
New Mexico Music Commission	

## Objectives and Goals of the CII

- Support entrepreneurs and small businesses in creating economic opportunities.
- Support education and workforce training initiative to facilitate CII growth and success.
- Serve as an information clearinghouse by providing resources and opportunities to CII stakeholders.
- Act as a liaison between CII-related businesses and local organizations.

## Six Identified Strategies to accomplish objectives and goals

1. Regular meetings, trainings, and workshops to facilitate communication, networking, and capacity building among practitioners and supporters of creative industries
2. Facilitating large scale cultural experiences that offer economic opportunities
3. Ensure that local youth see creative industries as part of their future, hiring student interns, and implementing a student art program
4. Invest \$30,000 in downtown infrastructure improvements to accommodate artists and vendors and enhance accessibility
5. Two consultants with expertise in the areas of Communication and IT skills will be hired to offer one-on-one sessions upon request
6. Development and implementation of wayfinding map for the Belen Arts & Cultural District

## Means by which the Belen CII achieved its goals and objectives

### 1. Regular meetings, trainings, and workshops to facilitate communication, networking, and capacity building among practitioners and supporters of creative industries

The CII supported entrepreneurial educational trainings including marketing and promotion for creative industry growth and success. Beginning in January of 2024, CII sponsored a series of monthly presentations, trainings, and workshops geared toward educating local entrepreneurs on ways to build or expand their businesses and creating a bridge between the arts and businesses.

- January 20 *Events Calendar Planning for Belen Arts & Cultural District*  
Information sharing on purpose of the Creative Industries, its goals, and schedule. This initial meeting was to inform the public of planned trainings, workshops, and meetings. It also provided a forum for local art galleries and businesses to present their 2024 calendars of events.
- February 03 *Communications between Businesses - Rhona Espinoza, Chamber of Commerce/ Branding Your Business - Karen Keese*  
Attendees engaged in an interactive exercise to build a brand identity for their business and explored platforms and strategies to help a business stand out in the marketplace.

- February 17 *Making It Public: How Public Art Economically Impacts a Community – Paula Castillo*  
Participants were given an overview of the different forms that public art and funding can take and the range of processes and materials necessary to produce meaningful public art. Information was shared on state funding for public art.
- March 02 *Belen Arts & Cultural District Economic Plan - Ben Romero, Valencia County Business Incubator/Michelle Negrette, New Mexico MainStreet*  
The audience was introduced to the services of a local business incubator and provided information on the economic value of the arts in a community.
- March 16 *Accessing Broader Markets and Building Sales - Christopher Garcia, Valencia County Small Business Development Center and Wilma Woollard, local entrepreneur*  
Presentation included ideas for local small business owners on marketing platforms, methods of payment, building a clientele, follow-through, business licensing, display ideas, and expansion. Information was given on the extensive services offered through the SBDC.
- April 06 *Grant Writing - Jenna Rael*  
Attendees were taught the benefits, the process, key components, tips for writing successful grants, terms to know, FAQs, and important resources to utilize.
- May 04 *Preservation and Restoration of Historic Properties - Steven Moffson and Matt Saionz, New Mexico Historic Preservation Division/Bob Dorsey – historic Silver-Bar Studios/Tsailii Rogers – historic Oñate Theater*  
State historians Moffson and Saionz explained the requirements for and economic benefits of registering properties as historical. Local restorers Dorsey and Rogers shared their personal journeys of restoring historical properties in Belen.
- May 18 *Review of implementation of CII strategies and discussion of economic impact*

Measurement Tools: The impact of these workshops/meetings/trainings was measured by requesting that all participants fill out an evaluation form after every session.

**OUTCOMES:** These sessions were attended by over 100 participants. All evaluations showed favorable reviews by attendees, many of whom gave feedback as to the specific ways they would be utilizing the shared information.

Additional avenues of enhanced communication, capacity building, and networking

- The Belen CII created and continues to use an email address for informing vendors/business owners of opportunities: [belenartsdistrict@gmail.com](mailto:belenartsdistrict@gmail.com).
- There are 300 vendors and businesses on this email's contacts list.
- This email is used to keep vendors informed of local and statewide vending opportunities while keeping them up to date on trainings, workshops, and meetings.

- The CII developed an event promotion checklist to aid local event planners with recommended steps and timelines for promoting and advertising events.

## 2. Monthly large-scale cultural experiences

Economic development was enhanced by supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses in the creative industries through local events to expand vending venues and through the creation of additional vending pop-ups.

The following is a list of events in which the CII participated. The ones marked with asterisks were initiated by the CII.

October:	Scarecrow Walk Haunted House Maze
November:	Shop and Stroll; galleries held Open House events*
December:	Miracle on Main Street Christmas Market*
January:	Belen's Matanza
March:	Balloon Art Walk on Becker*
April:	Earth Day Art Walk* Hummingbird Festival
May:	Spring Garden Art Event*
June:	Belenstock Annex* Colors on Parade*

A total of NINE site-specific events were held between October 1, 2023 and May 31, 2024 with TWO additional events planned for June.

**OUTCOMES:** The events listed above enabled over 300 artists, craftspeople, vendors, and galleries opportunities to sell their products. In addition to artisans, participating entrepreneurs included food trucks, breweries, wineries, and musicians.

In addition, the CII supported and promoted presentations by three performing artists.

- Cisne de Nuevo Mexico, folklorico dance troupe
- Debra Dockens, student guitarist
- Omar Villanueva, classical guitarist

## 3. Ensure that youth see creative industries as part of their future, hire student interns, implement a student art program

Two high school seniors were hired as student art interns. Goals for interns were as follows:

- Create a series of marketing classes using various art forms.
- Facilitate these marketing classes.
- Increase personal knowledge of art galleries and artists in the Belen area.
- Expand knowledge of various genres of art.
- Promote art and art venues in the Belen area.

- Increase understanding of the business aspects of running an art gallery.
- Explore potential issues that women in business may face.
- Curate student art exhibition.

How these goals were attained:

- Interns planned art activities for “The Young Entrepreneurs” student group designed to teach them the basics of creating marketing tools using art techniques.
- Interns conducted these classes under supervision of the Grant Facilitator.
- Interns visited local galleries, attended openings, and wrote reports of their experiences.
- Interns created social media platforms to showcase local artists and galleries.
- Interns journaled and discussed issues that arose, both positive and negative.
- Interns helped the Belen Art League in activities such as hanging art, judging art shows, and fundraising events.
- Interns did research on various genres of art and engaged in training sessions with the Grant Facilitator.

Activities carried out by interns:

Young Entrepreneurs Classes: This eight-week series used various art forms to help the participating students develop a business brand and create a logo, a mascot, and a slogan. These components were then used by the students to create business card prototypes, tee shirts, and tote bags.

Learning about art venues in Belen: Interns worked at the Belen Public Library helping with the children’s art programs. They worked with the Director of the Belen Harvey House Museum learning how to set up social media outlets. They visited the galleries in Belen.

Interviews: The interns interviewed and photographed local artists.

Social media outlets: The two interns created accounts for TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. They used these outlets to upload their interviews and images of artists and galleries.

Student art classes: The interns recruited students to participate in classes on acrylics, mixed media, poured resin, and wood sculpture. The interns also participated in these classes.

Expand knowledge of art genres: Interns participated in learning sessions designed to help them identify the different art genres and expand their art vocabulary, and to teach them ways to interact with an art piece.

Participation in the Belen Art League: Interns were shown how the gallery’s inventory system works; they helped with several fundraising events and one art hanging.

Measurement tools: Interns were given evaluation forms that measured their sense of their own participation and the value of the project.

**OUTCOMES:** Many aspects of the internships were highly successful as seen from the reporting of the interns and the students with whom they worked. Both interns worked an average of 10 hours per week; one intern for 14 weeks, and the other for 23 weeks.

#### **4. Invest in downtown infrastructure improvements to accommodate artists, vendors, and event attendees and enhance wheelchair accessibility**

Prior to formulating a list of suggested infrastructure improvements, a questionnaire was sent out to businesses and organizations operating within the perimeters of the Belen Arts & Cultural District. Their suggestions were incorporated into a list of ideas that was presented to the Belen City Manager for approval. Suggestions included shade coverings in more areas along Becker Avenue, benches, awnings, wheelchair accessible picnic tables, and diaper changing stations.

**OUTCOMES:** The following improvements were selected for implementation. Materials and/or services have been purchased, and installation has begun.

- Three cement pads, two with permanent shade structures
- Seven benches
- Nine stand-alone shade coverings
- One ADA picnic table
- Three diaper changing stations
- Nine wayfinding map kiosks

#### **5. Two consultants with expertise in the areas of Communication and IT skills will be hired to offer one-on-one sessions upon request**

Karen Keese was hired as the Communication Consultant. Her accomplishments for the Belen Creative Industries Initiative are as follows:

- Created and delivered two-hour interactive Branding workshop
- Created flyers and Facebook graphics for workshops and Arts & Cultural District events
- Created FB ads for workshops and events and boosted to customized audiences
- Wrote five print ads for county newspaper, promoting workshops, events, and consultant services
- Planning/promotion/coordination of multiple-venue Balloon Walk event along Becker Avenue in March
- Planning/promotion/coordination of multiple-venue Earth Walk event along Becker Avenue in April
- Planning/organization/writing/graphic support for wayfinding map for Arts & Cultural District attractions and businesses
- Developed Event Promotion checklist for organizers of Arts & Cultural District events
- Consultant Services provided to six clients:
  - Photo shoot and flyer creation for dance troupe promotion
  - Marketing and accounting strategies for re-seller
  - Online sales strategies for pottery artist
  - Strategies for growing niche newsletter circulation

- Resources for launching a photography business
- Trademark research and reports

Brian Wood was hired as the IT Consultant. His accomplishments for the Belen Creative Industries Initiative are as follows:

- Solved a problem with client’s computer not communicating with printer
- Helped client create an RSVP invitation in Gmail
- Helped client learn how to use her Stripe credit card reader
- Solved another problem with computer/printer miscommunication
- Assisted client who needed help setting up her Venmo account
- Helped client set up a website for a mural business; met two more times to train them on how to maintain their site
- Helped client get his products to show up in his WIX store
- Designed and produced four flyers promoting Belen Art League events
- Client needed assistance setting up his new computer
- Client needed assistance setting up a second Gmail email address in her current account
- Designed flyer for free IT Service/Marketing Service
- Client needed help setting up a new Gmail email; linked it to computer mail app; fixed clock time; cleaned dust from interior
- Client needed help transferring money from Velle app
- Client needed assistance creating a new website; trained her how to maintain it
- Aided quilt entrepreneur in resetting password for emailing

**OUTCOMES:** A total of twenty-one clients received customized consultant services to address business issues. In addition, consultants created flyers, newspaper ads, and Facebook ads to help get the word out to local entrepreneurs about free educational offerings and consultant services, as well as Arts & Cultural District events with vending opportunities.

## **6. Development and implementation of wayfinding map for the Belen Arts & Cultural District**

Based on input from our initial community meeting, the creation of a large street map/directory that identifies the attractions and visitor-facing businesses within Belen’s Arts & Cultural District became a priority for supporting creative industries in Belen. This directory, to be installed in permanent kiosks, identifies 38 different destinations, including art galleries, eateries, wineries, retail shops, and historic buildings. In addition, corresponding sidewalk decals will be placed outside directory destinations.

**OUTCOMES:** The wayfinding map created by the CII provides free advertising for businesses within the Belen Arts & Cultural District. In addition, the CII team wrote descriptions and created digital logo files for a number of small businesses that did not have these resources, so they could be represented on the map/directory.



## **CONCLUSION**

The grant money made available by the New Mexico EDD for Belen's local objectives has been transformative, and we are honored to be one of the Creative Industries Division's inaugural 18 projects.

The Belen CII team has seen firsthand our local community of artists, artisans, and entrepreneurs become more educated about various aspects of their businesses, more informed about the resources and opportunities available to help them succeed, empowered to start and grow businesses, inspired by the challenges and successes of their fellow entrepreneurs, and energized by the realization that they are part of a unique community. Members of that community have never been more connected and more networked, as a result of their participating in CII-sponsored workshops/events and subscribing to our email network, which increased sixfold during the initiative.

The infrastructure improvements in our Arts & Cultural District are of incalculable value, enhancing our ability to accommodate vendors, artists, and performers during large-scale events and smaller pop-ups, as well as revitalizing our walkable downtown core for the benefit of residents, visitors, and tourists.

Finally, the partnership among businesses and organizations that support the vitality of the creative economy in Belen has never been stronger, as a result of organic collaboration on our CII objectives. There is a renewed sense of commitment to Belen's present--and promising future--as an authentic arts and culture destination.

### **Economic Outcome from Belen CII**

- One workshop participant used the information from the trainings to open a business offering alternative healthcare practices.
- Three local artists used the free IT services to create a website for their mural painting company.
- One workshop participant established a market utilizing her greenhouse, selling seedlings to the public and local stores and participating in the vending events the CII created.
- Local galleries reported an increase in sales during street events such as the Earth Day Walk and other Arts & Cultural District events initiated by the CII.
- Approximately 300 vendors participated in the events created or promoted by the Belen CII. The majority of participants reported good sales and boosted income from events created by the CII.

Exhibit A – Final Expenditures

Creative Industries	Initial Budget	Actual Expenditures
Part-Time Coordinator	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Student Intern	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 5,199.00
Training Facilitator x 4	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Meeting & Training Supplies	\$ 2,600.00	\$ 1,798.00
Student Art Class Instructors (4 sessions)	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Supplies for Student Art Classes	\$ 1,400.00	\$ 1,228.00
Communications Consultant	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Print Ads and Social Media	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,500.00
Event Venue Infrastructure	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 46,275.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 100,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 100,000.00</b>