



ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

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## **New Mexico awards \$258K to economic development projects across 11 counties**

*Grants to boost jobs and business growth, over half the awardees in rural and frontier communities*

SANTA FE — Twelve projects spanning eleven New Mexico counties will receive economic development grants totaling \$258,500 to create jobs, support local businesses, and strengthen growth, including rural economies.

Through the Local Economic Assistance & Development Support (LEADS) program, the New Mexico Economic Development Department awards annual grants for projects that create jobs, enhance the tax base, and incentivize business development. The grants will fund eleven programs across nine rural and frontier communities and three urban areas.

“LEADS projects are tailored to the community’s needs and have an immediate impact on the local economy,” said **Rob Black**, cabinet secretary for the New Mexico Economic Development Department. “These projects bring the public and private sectors together to make positive, long-lasting, and regionally appropriate change.”

“Last year’s LEADS grant allowed us to prepare land for development and bring it to a shovel-ready state,” said **Mike Espiritu**, president and CEO of the Roswell Chaves County Economic Development Corporation. “That strategic investment directly contributed to the successful recruitment of Amazon, Inc., a transformative moment for our region’s economic future. With this year’s funds, we can look forward to additional site development to recruit new projects.”

“The LEADS grant will accelerate AREA’s ability to launch a collaborative, data-driven strategy to tackle one of our region’s most pressing economic challenges — retaining and attracting talent,” said **Chad Matheson**, senior vice president of AREA. “This investment empowers us to turn vision into action and build a stronger workforce for the future of greater Albuquerque.”

“The LEADS grant has had a transformative effect on our community,” said **Max Khudiakov**, director of economic development and tourism, Town of Red River. “We’re launching a targeted business retention and resilience program that will help local entrepreneurs survive, but also equip them to grow, create jobs, and strengthen our tax base in a community where 99% of our businesses are family-owned and operated. This investment protects not just livelihoods, but legacies.”

Individual grants ranged from \$19,000 to \$25,000, up from last year’s \$5,000 to \$25,000. Projects focus on workforce development, business retention, and infrastructure improvements.

### **FY2026 LEADS grant recipients are:**

- **AREA** (Albuquerque Regional Economic Alliance) was awarded \$25,000 for its Talent Insights Advisory Council, which will partner with UNM and/or CNM students to survey working-age individuals to assess current perceptions of the community as a place to live and work and set goals for further growth and collaboration.
- **Clovis Economic Development** was awarded \$25,000 to implement a Workforce Readiness & Entrepreneur Survey to assess current and future labor needs, identify skill gaps, and strengthen the local talent pipeline.
- **Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation** was awarded \$25,000 to continue

to build on solid, effective business relationships with e-base employers through its core BRE Outreach Program.

- **Grow Raton** was awarded \$25,000 to finalize the design and renovation of its commercial kitchen, pilot test culinary and food entrepreneurship training modules, launch outreach campaigns, and track usage and outcomes.
- **City of Lovington** was awarded \$20,000 to fund a modern, reliable community space with high-profile partners and companies as a central hub for community and corporate events.
- **MRGEDA** (Middle Rio Grande Valley) was awarded \$19,500 to develop and deliver a regional, small business support initiative and create an Economic Development Plan for the City of Socorro.
- **MVEDA** (Mesilla Valley) was awarded \$25,000 to expand its “AutomateUp” skillset development and industry certification initiative to reach a larger audience and expand industry certification to a wider range of industries.
- **Town of Red River** was awarded \$25,000 to create a Resilient Business Toolkit, three business continuity workshops, 30 one-on-one continuity assessments during BRE visits, and implement the “Prepare to Stay Open” campaign.
- **Roswell/Chaves County EDC** was awarded \$25,000 to develop an additional shovel-ready site in Chaves County to attract commercial or industrial activity and expand the economic base of the city and county.
- **Sandoval Economic Alliance** was awarded \$25,000 for its "Grow Your Own" initiative, which fosters a robust economic ecosystem in Sandoval County through Business Retention & Expansion, Micro-Economic Gardening, and Manufacturing Local Connections programs.
- **Taos County** was awarded \$19,000 to create a BRE Program Framework, Creative Industries BRE program pilot, Hazard Mitigation and Business Disaster Planning Tools & Resource Development, and more.

To learn more about LEADS program, visit [edd.newmexico.gov/community-development/leads/](http://edd.newmexico.gov/community-development/leads/).

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*The Town of Red River's main industry is tourism. Every year, over 450,000 visitors escape the big city for refuge in Red River's cool, mountainous valley. Photo courtesy of the Town of Red River.*





*Grow Raton commercial kitchen will have five studios to rent and a basement for commercial food storage processing of value added packaging. Pictured left to right: EDD regional rep Tim Hagaman with Grow Raton staff: VP Brandy Dietz, President Shayne Young, and Secretary Dr. Loretta Conder.*



*AREA's September 2024 Town Hall, hosted by President & CEO Danielle Casey, brought together top voices in site selection. Pictured left to right: Danielle Casey, president & CEO for AREA, Tony Ramirez, MBA, founder, PlazaSource LLC at Navigator Consulting, James Blair, founder and managing director of Navigator Consulting.*

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*EDD's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive. EDD's programs contribute directly to this mission by funding workforce training and infrastructure that supports business growth, helping every community create a thriving economy.*



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