



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2022**

Northern New Mexico Workforce Integration Network (“WIN”) Receives \$6.4 Million to Develop Healthcare and Skilled Trades Workforce

SANTA FE—Yesterday, the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District, the Regional Development Corporation, and Santa Fe Community College were awarded a \$6.4 million American Rescue Plan Good Jobs Challenge grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The grant will be used to create the Northern New Mexico Workforce Integration Network (WIN), which will expand the region’s healthcare and skilled trades workforce through training, apprenticeships, higher education, and job placement. WIN is one of 32 awards out of 509 applications submitted nationwide.

WIN aims to transform and diversify the regional economy by building a robust workforce in the key areas of Healthcare and Skilled Trades, leading to increased equity and more high-paying jobs. WIN will be open to unemployed or underemployed adults, or adults looking to skill up, with a focus on low-income individuals, people of color, and people recovering from substance use disorder and/or former incarceration.

Ambrose Baros, Executive Director of Hoy Recovery, is excited about the project. "This is great news for behavioral health providers throughout Northern New Mexico as it supports a vital need in workforce development for both the clients we serve, and the trained professionals needed to provide this very important service. Treatment for individuals struggling with substance use disorders is much more than counseling; it involves community integration that provides economic opportunity to support the living wage and improve quality of life," says Baros.

The North Central New Mexico Development District (NCNMEDD) will administer the project, overseeing new staff, including a Project Director and five Navigators who will work throughout a seven-county region to connect participants to training and employers. “WIN navigators are critical to the project’s success,” says Executive Director Monica Abeita. “They will provide the on-site, one-to-one support and connections to wrap-around services, which are critical to working with our target populations.”

The Regional Development Corporation (RDC), a 501c3 dedicated to improving economic development in Northern New Mexico, will serve as the backbone partner for the Skilled Trades sector. The RDC will oversee training, apprenticeship programs, job placements, coordination with area unions, Los Alamos National Laboratory and its subcontractors, rural electric cooperatives, and construction companies. The grant also provides for a mobile classroom, which will bring training to remote areas and will support outreach and education for the trades at educational institutions and other

venues. The mobile unit will be owned by U.A. Local Union 412 for pipefitters, plumbers, and HVAC workers, but will be adapted for multiple trades. “WIN will strengthen partnerships that will allow for building workforce training opportunities, thereby ensuring individuals can stay and work in their home communities,” says Val Alonzo, Executive Director of the RDC.

Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) is the backbone partner for the Healthcare sector. Working with colleges around the region, SFCC will support coordinated healthcare training for high-demand occupations. SFCC will pilot a clinical placement system modeled on the Arizona Clinical Education Consortium, for better matching between students and healthcare clinics and hospitals. SFCC will also oversee implementation of the nationally recognized I-BEST contextualized learning approach across training sites. I-BEST will help participants accelerate through education requirements while receiving specialized training in healthcare or skilled trades. Dr. Becky Rowley, President of Santa Fe Community College, is pleased to be part of the project. “WIN will support our I-BEST healthcare pathway and equip students with the skills required to be successful. SFCC looks forward to collaborating with our partner schools to provide quality education and training so that our graduates will be well prepared to serve their communities in high-demand, high-paying healthcare jobs,” says Rowley.

To support region-wide impact, the RDC and SFCC will work with institutions of higher education across the region to expand training in both sectors. Luna Community College, Northern New Mexico College, UNM-Los Alamos, and UNM-Taos all offer training, certification, and degree programs that will be available to WIN participants. Each institution will hire an I-BEST instructor and Healthcare and Skilled Trades faculty members to support the project. In alignment with New Mexico Higher Education Department goals, WIN will also develop course crosswalks among institutions to reduce barriers to completion and increase transferability throughout the region. Dr. Edward Martinez, President of Luna Community College says, “The Good Jobs Challenge Grant will make it possible for Luna to enhance training for students in healthcare careers and build student skills in math and writing. This will make it possible for us to expand opportunities for students in critical areas for our communities.”

The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District was created in 1967 as an economic development district under the federal Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965. It serves as the council of governments for Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, Los Alamos, Taos, Mora, Colfax, San Miguel and rural Sandoval counties. The team that developed the Northern New Mexico WIN application includes NCNMEDD: Monica Abeita, Executive Director and Christopher Madrid, Community Development Director; RDC: Val Alonzo, Executive Director, Camilla Bustamante, Workforce and Academic Network Development and Carla Rachkowski, Director of Operations; SFCC: Ann Black, former Director of Grants and Contract Training; and Jackson Writing and Research: Jennifer Jackson, founder and grant writer. The team is grateful to the LANL Foundation for contributing funds that supported the development of the grant application.

###