



NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Message from Chairwoman

Grants

Martha Garcia



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

First, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all Board members that volunteer their time and expertise, and that have bestowed me the honor of serving as your Chairwoman. I am following a long line of prestigious Chairs that includes Commissioner Billy Moore of Thoreau, Mayor Dr. Bill Hall of Farmington, and Mayor Warren Mathers of Milan. I am proud to have accepted this position as I believe my experience in almost every level of government will serve the organization well, and I know that our dedicated and experienced staff will help us to continue our 50 years of performance and service to the region.

Second, it is my pleasure to present this FY2023 Annual Report for the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG). The last year embodies a very significant period of stability and growth for our organization, and I believe this report serves to provide the broader regional community with a small glimpse into the big picture of COG's work.

All COG members and partners should be proud of the many challenges we have met head-on and for which we have successfully found solutions and new opportunities. Not only in this past period and through a global pandemic, but over the last five decades, we have faced issues that needed our attention and COG has been the vehicle to get us through them together. Local communities in our region are more capable of meeting challenges due to the work that has been done and is currently being done by this organization and its members.

Next, I wanted to thank Deputy Assistant Secretary Dennis Alvord, for the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), for coming to our region to see and hear firsthand how our region is focused on diversification to transform our regional economy from boom-bust to robust and building an equitable economy built on innovative and sustainable industries that provide quality jobs for people where they are rooted. We recognize EDA as a frontline partner that has committed to sustained investment in its assistance to our coal communities. Lastly, I wanted to express my deepest gratitude to our "Regional Champions", who embody the regional spirit of collaboration and have provided leadership of distinction. Special thanks to Mayor Michael Padilla (Aztec), Manager Maryann Ustick (Gallup), and State Representative Harry Garcia, for their regional leadership, dedication, and ethic of service to our region and its communities.

Enjoy the Annual Report and our Annual Luncheon! I encourage all of you to give us feedback you may have as part of continuous improvement and to join me in letting our COG staff know that they are appreciated and seen in the work that they do for our region and its communities.

— Martha Garcia, Chairwoman of the Board



Message from Executive Director

Evan Williams



I am honored to present you our Annual Report for the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG). In this report, you will get a sense of our region and your COG's highlights and accomplishments.

First, none of this work gets done without our members and the generous contributions that they provide to allow us the ability to do the work we love and that allows us to leverage additional funds and attract other partners. I appreciate our members and our Board for their support of our staff and their increasing commitment to show that support. You cannot make Stone Soup without first having the kettle and the stone.

Second, I want to express my gratitude to the seasoned COG staff. They continue to show up, accept the challenge, and achieve results for the region. All the staff continue to advance in their careers and have been elevated to manage their own offices across the main concentrations of our work including transportation, economic development, water and environment, and innovation. One of our major goals set and nearly accomplished by the staff was to attract \$75 million in investments into infrastructure, facilities, and strategic projects in our region. I look forward to seeing what

this team can do and appreciate having my team as there is none better. The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the COGster doing it.

Next, we are bringing home some hardware and getting some national recognition for our work in the field including:

- Star of the Southwest Award | Prewitt Industrial Park Master Plan | Southwest Region Economic Development Association (SWREDA)
- Excellence in Regional Transportation Award | Prewitt-Milan Transportation Master Plan | National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)
- Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award | Water Planning & Regional Collaboration | National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)

Lastly, I wanted to extend my congratulations to our Regional Champions who have paved the way to make our work possible and for all those that actively support the COG and help us grow as an organization to expand our contribution to the region.

Enjoy the Annual Report and let us know if you see something that you are interested in and how we can help your community achieve its vision for the future.

— Evan Williams, Executive Director



BOARD MEMBERS

2022 - 2023

Little Water

Board Chair

Martha Garcia
Cibola County

1st Vice-Chair

Michael Padilla, Sr.
City of Aztec

2nd Vice-Chair

Fran Palochak
City of Gallup

Treasurer

Louie Bonaguidi
City of Gallup

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Cibola County

Linda Rogers
City of Farmington

Danielle Notah
McKinley County

Michael Schaaf
City of Gallup

Walt Eddy
McKinley County

Maryann Ustick
City of Gallup

Robert Baca
McKinley County

Eric Garcia
City of Grants

Anthony Dimas, Jr.
McKinley County

Fred Rodarte
City of Grants

GloJean Todacheene
San Juan County

James Mercer
Village of Milan

Roseanne Lopez
Village of Milan

Alternate

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Cibola County

Donica Sharpe
City of Bloomfield

Daniel Torrez
Cibola County

Julie Baird
City of Farmington

Brian Money
McKinley County

Warren Unsicker
City of Farmington

Gary McDaniel
San Juan County

John DeYoung
City of Gallup

Jim Cox
San Juan County

Donald Jaramillo
City of Grants

Jeff Blackburn
City of Aztec

Chris Archuleta
Village of Milan

Vivian Brumbelow
Village of Milan





REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Joint Policy & Technical Committee

RTPO Chair

Dorothy Claw
Ramah Navajo

RTPO Vice-Chair

Dennis Felipe
Pueblo of Acoma

Voting Members

Joseph Baca
Cibola County

Linda Cooke
Village of Milan

Kaci Bustos
Cibola County

Vacant
Northern Navajo

Rodney Skersick
McKinley County

Vacant
Eastern Navajo

Clyde Strain
City of Gallup

Leonard Ludi
Pueblo of Laguna

Don Jaramillo
City of Grants

Royce Gchachu
Pueblo of Zuni

Alternate

Judy Horacek
Cibola County

Denise Baca
Village of Milan

Nick Porell
San Juan County

Margie Begay
Eastern Navajo

Alicia Santiago
City of Gallup

Roxann Hughte
Pueblo of Zuni

Shannon Devine
City of Grants



REVOLVING LOAN FUND

RLF Committee

San Juan County

Joshua Bollacker
Four Corners Community Bank

Dawn Facka
WESST

Ken Hare
Blanco Land & Cattle Co.

Jim Cox
Cox Consulting

John Faverino
3E Energy

McKinley County

Doug Decker
McKinley County

Mario Hooee
Zuni Main Street

Elizabeth Munoz-Hamilton
Gallup Living

Alvin Thompson
Thompson Store

Brett Newberry
Newberry & Associates

Cibola County

Mac Juarez
Continental Divide Electric Coop

Heather Porter
RE/MAX Elegance



SAN JUAN CHAMPION

Navajo
Lake



Michael Padilla, Sr.
San Juan County Champion

- **Mayor, City of Aztec (1992 – 1998)**
- **Mayor, City of Aztec (2020 – 2024)**
- **Former Member, Aztec School Board**
- **Vice-Chair, COG Board Member**

Mayor Michael Padilla has answered the call to service many times during his life both for his country and his community.

Having served as a member of the United States Marine Corps in the Vietnam War, Mayor Padilla has a level of respect for those who have served. He has a personal connection and an understanding for those who have served and have returned.

In a blog by Senator Martina Heinrich, he took time to recognize Mayor Padilla by saying:
“During my visit, I was also proud to present a flag flown over the United States Capitol to former Aztec mayor and decorated Marine Corps Vietnam veteran Mike Padilla. Mike has long been a champion for veterans in San Juan County. Last fall, Mike helped me present a Vietnam veteran with his Bronze Star Medal and recognize another veteran

for this more recent service in Afghanistan.”

He is not bashful in letting you know what he thinks, which means you always know where he stands. He has a passion for the City of Aztec and that comes with a sense of urgency to get things done. Some of the issues that caused many residents to ask him to return to elected office were big projects that needed to get done from drought and water storage to public works and road improvements to downtown vibrancy and economic development. He has helped to move things forward and keep focused on those projects that are paramount for the community.

He has a big heart for the City of Aztec and making sure it keeps its identity and small-town spirit, while dealing with the changing world and economy. He understands how to make sure Aztec builds on what makes it special and not try to be something it is not. The City of Aztec continues to make lists for being a great place to live, work, play, and visit.

We appreciate him for stepping up and stepping onto the COG Board of Directors and helping us understand what the true needs are of the City of Aztec, San Juan County, and the greater Four Corners region.





Maryann Ustick
McKinley County Champion

- **City Manager**
- **Board Member of the COG**
- **Founding Member of the Gallup Executive Directors' Alliance**
- **Wife | Mother | Grandmother**
- **Animal Lover**

Maryann Ustick is the quintessential professional City Manger representing the standard of knowledge, quality, and class.

Maryann Ustick was born in South Orange, NJ. When she was younger, she wanted to go into the medical profession which would have led her to a place and position that would have helped people, but thankfully she found her way and dedicated her life to public service. Maryann was born to Irish and Lithuanian parents and was an Airforce brat. Her family was always willing to move someplace new so they could have an impact on a new community and Maryann kept that mentality throughout her career.

Maryann began her public service in Virginia Beach, VA as a state inspector and then moved into a position with the city working on community development. She then moved and worked in the following cities including Phoenix, AZ; Pensacola, FL; Las Cruces, NM; North Las Vegas, NV; and Destin FL. Her final stop was to serve as the City Manager at the City of Gallup, NM where she served for 9 years. Maryann has always been a true career city manager as serving for numerous cities across the United States.

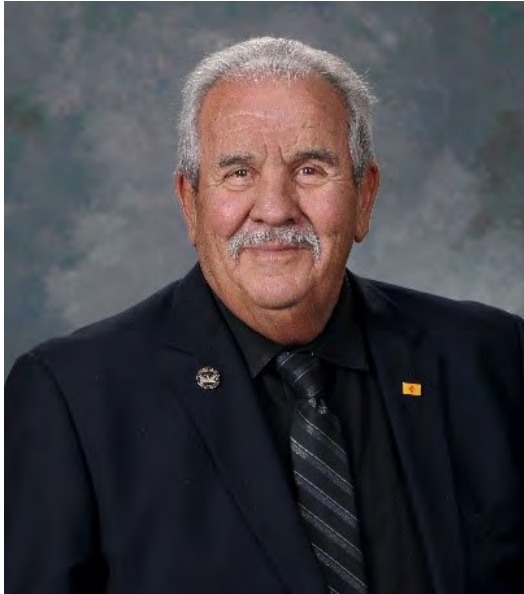
Maryann has led and been part of many organizations throughout her career. She served 40+ years as part of the International City Managers Association. She has served on many committees and boards and has done so much to support others and especially women in their careers. She has won local government awards as well as women in government awards. Maryann received a degree in history and went on to get her masters in public administration from Old Dominion.

Her last City Council was the perfect capstone on her career with the City of Gallup covering issues from legislative reports to our nightly Indigenous Dance program to behavioral health to Interstate 40 and other critical transportation projects to cannabis tax use to abortion. Maryann could explain the details on any topic and any issue facing the City and provide recommendations for policy officials that could be trusted.

Maryann served on the COG Board and was a mentor and trusted advisor on organization management. She put a lot of faith in the COG team and allowed us to get our first chance to complete a creative placemaking project – Coal Avenue Commons. We appreciate the work, the professional knowledge, and your dedication to finish projects big and small for the greater good of the region, the City of Gallup, and all the cities you blessed with your service.

CIBOLA CHAMPION

El Malpais



Harry Garcia
Cibola County Champion

- **State Representative**
- **Vice-Chair, House Transportation, Public Works, & Capital Improvement**
- **Member, House Appropriations & Finance Committee**
- **Member, Legislative Finance Committee**
- **Chair, Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee**

Since 2016, State Representative Harry Garcia has served District 69 with distinction. District 69 is one of the largest districts by land mass in the State of New Mexico. This district includes the counties of Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley, San Juan, Socorro, and Valencia counties making Representative Garcia a true regional champion for the entire Northwest New Mexico region.

Having served as a member of the United States Marine Corps in the Vietnam War, Representative Garcia is a staunch advocate for veterans. He makes it clear that we need to honor our veterans who sacrificed and endured for the freedom we enjoy today and that veterans need to receive the services and benefits that they earned. He has

sponsored many pieces of legislation to support our veterans and he has continued to advocate for the Department of Veterans Services and making sure we have Veterans Service Officers throughout the State and serving rural areas.

As a long-time business owner, Representative Garcia knows firsthand what it takes to have to hustle every day to make a living and provide jobs to help families make ends meet. Being a resident of Grants, Harry has seen and knows to well the boom-bust nature of our economy and the effect it has on the area. He actively works to promote economic development and assist our energy communities in their efforts to diversify their economies. He has supported funding for economic development programs and projects throughout his District and throughout the State of New Mexico.

Jackson Gibson was asked about Harry when he was nominated to succeed W. Ken Martinez in serving District 69. Mr. Gibson simply put it that "Harry was solid. If he tells you he will do something, he does." This is how I got to know Representative Garcia and he is never afraid to go into communities that are having issues and hear them out. He is always willing to show up. He is the type of leader that when there is a crisis or a global pandemic, he shows up with supplies and a water truck.



PARTNER CHAMPION



Lancing Adams
Agency Partner Champion

- **Tourism Development Director**
- **Oversees the Tourism Infrastructure Program**
- **Participates in various Funding Review Committees**
- **Developed the Destination Forward Program**
- **A NM True Ambassador**

Lancing Adams has served with distinction in his various roles and assignments within the State government, where he currently serves as the Tourism Development Director promoting our State and building the foundation for catalytic tourism infrastructure.

In his role, Lancing has forged a partnership with the Council of Governments to support tourism infrastructure projects, funding, and a dashboard to catalyze and build our portfolio of sight-doing opportunities. He has helped advocate and support capital outlay and funding close to \$30M for the following catalytic projects over the past few years.

He has always been an active listener, a problem-solver, a process insider, and an action-oriented person who keeps the community at heart. Once

Lancing determines the course needed and navigates to yes with the powers that be, he tells you what he is going to do and by when – and he delivers. He had the idea of developing a program that would help communities build tourism infrastructure, assets, and amenities to help them deliver on their brand promises and now he has grown that idea into a \$3M program called Destination Forward.

Lancing has served in various roles both public and private as he built his career. He is a lobo (do not hold that against him) receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Government as well as his Master of Public Administration. He has worked in local government assisting with special projects under Mayor Richard Berry, in the City of Albuquerque. He worked in State government at New Mexico Tourism Department; Children, Youth, and Families Department; and in the Office of the Governor as the Cabinet Director in the Susana Martinez administration. He ventured into the private sector where his work focused on luxury home design-building and real estate, but eventually he found his way home to New Mexico and back to the Tourism Department.

Lancing knows our region firsthand from our key destinations to our tourism infrastructure to being engulfed in the Connie Mack World Series and the Gallup Inter-tribal Indian Ceremonial.

The COG is happy to bestow this honor to Lancing Adams and we look to our continued work with him and joint service to our citizens and communities.

- Gallup Cultural Center
- McKenzie Ridge Trail Connector – Zuni Mountains Trail System
- Red Rock Park
- Navajo Code Talker Museum
- Farmington All-Abilities Park
- Grants Regional Indoor Area
- Milan Swimming Pool
- McGee Park
- Farmington Gateway Park



NATIONAL RECOGNITION



2002

Adventure Gallup & Beyond

In partnership with the NWNMCOG, Adventure Gallup & Beyond, was awarded the "Pioneer Award" by the National Association of Development Organizations. The award recognized the innovative the AGB concept as a regional outdoor recreation organization that has supported development in the greater Gallup area.

2015

The Ristra Project NWCEDS

The New Mexico Association of Regional Councils (NewMARC), which includes the COG, set out on a mission to reformulate how economic and community development is conducted in the State of New Mexico. The result of collective efforts was the development of The Ristra Project.

2019

Zuni Mountains Trails Projects

A multi-agency effort between the U.S. Forest Service, McKinley and Cibola counties, and the COG has resulted in planning, designating, and designing hundreds of miles of trails within the Zuni Mountains. This collaborative effort has been recognized by NADO for its innovative approach to trail development.

2020

Prewitt Industrial Park

In response to recent closures of economic base employers Tri-State Escalante Generating Station (Prewitt, NM) and the Marathon Refinery (Gallup, NM), McKinley County in partnership with the COG initiated a master plan of the Prewitt Industrial Park to combat economic woes of the Northwest region.

2021

Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway

The COG through its Regional Transportation Planning Organization was successful in designating the Trail of the ancients Byway (NM) as a National Scenic Byway. The designated Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway will support tourism efforts and transportation endeavors to improve regional assets.



NATIONAL RECOGNITION



2022

Gallup Downtown MRA Plan

In 2022, COG staff was awarded a NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award for the work conducted to complete the Gallup Downtown MRA Plan. COG staff was awarded based on the methodology used to conduct plan (interactive and virtual) along with the content generated utilizing this innovative approach.

2023

Prewitt Industrial Park Master Plan

Recognized by SWREDA in 2023, the COG accepted an award for the Prewitt Industrial Park Master Plan. The plan is an effort to combat job loss and decline in revenue for the bi-county region after the closure of the Escalante Generating Station. The effort resulted in a master plan and 90% design of a speculative building.

2023

Prewitt-Milan Transportation Master Plan

A 2023 Excellence in Regional Transportation Award was awarded to NWNMCOG. A subregional transportation plan to prioritize and plan improvements; freight, railroad, road access, infrastructure to accommodate & support economic plans focused at the Prewitt Industrial Park & Milan Industrial Park to repurpose assets.

2023

Water Planning & Collaboration

Another Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from NADO awarded in 2023 for the COG's effort to stand up a water planning office and engage in regional collaboration efforts to ensure longterm water supply, provide small system support and training, and to implement water and wastewater infrastructure.



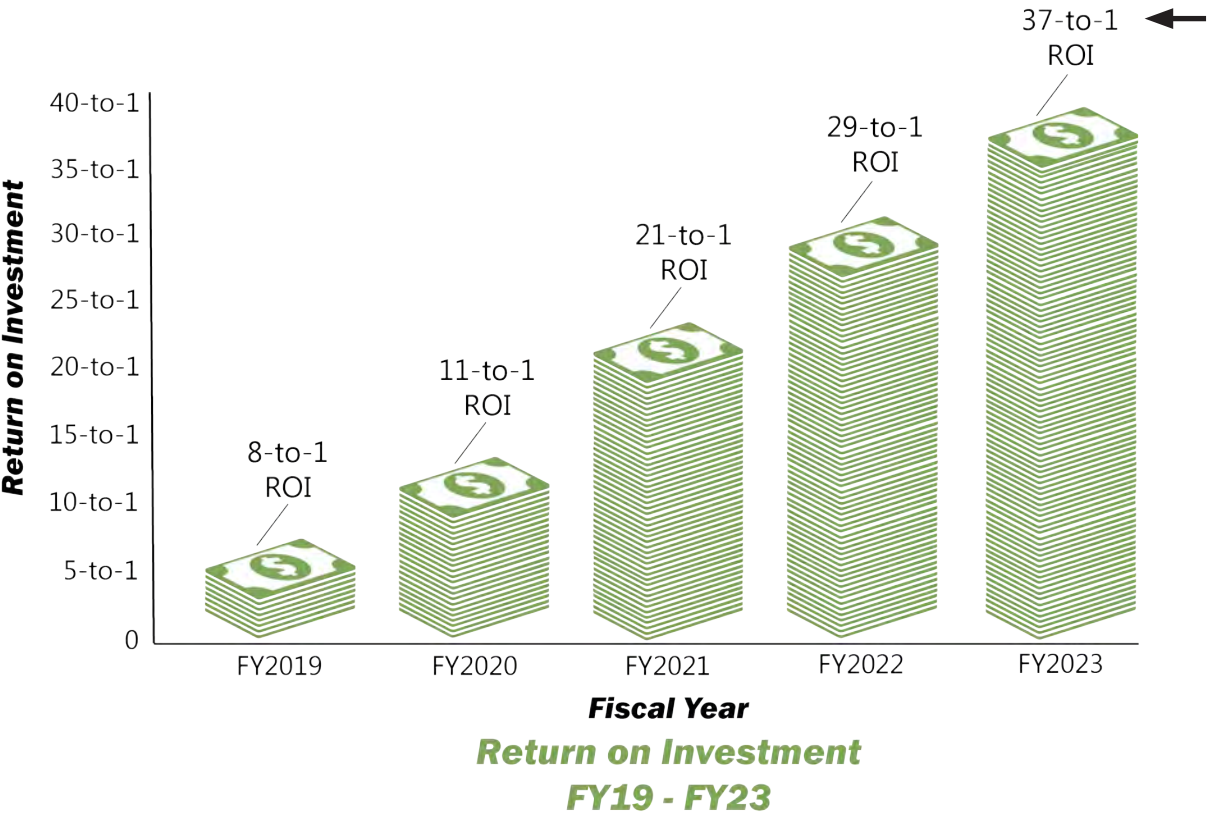
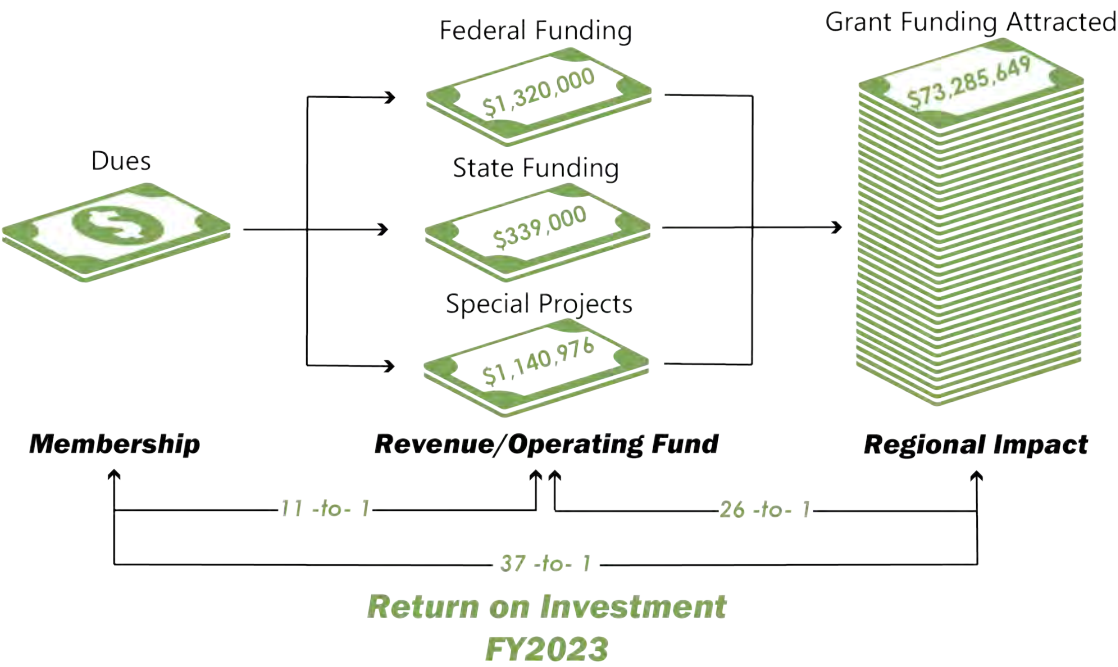
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FY2023 RETURN ON INVESTMENT

371

Since taking over the helm as Executive Director, Mr. Williams has worked with his staff to conduct annual return on investment reports to member governments who financially contribute to the COG. These reports include highlights of accomplishments and a monetary return on

investment recap. At the end of the year, each member government’s return on investment is incorporated into a regional recap to help the COG showcase our value to the region. Below is our Fiscal Year 2023 return on investment and our progression since FY2019.



In FY2023, the Council of Governments established an internal structure to allow for the creation of individual offices manned by existing staff, based on the expertise and passion of each planner. This organizational model has been explored numerous times over the past decade and in FY2023, Executive

Director Evan Williams felt like the COG was ready for change. The formation of each office will not only ensure continued service but will provide the opportunity for growth and innovation. Each office will play an integral role under the umbrella that is the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments.

The following offices were created in FY2023 to support and expand the COG menu of services:

Water Planning Office



Staffed by: Angelina Grey

- Stewards of regional water planning
- Small water system assistance & collaboration
- Drought contingency planning & conservation
- Project implementation & financing

Special Projects Office



Staffed by: Carrie House

- Data & mapping repository
- Trail Planning & design
- Multimedia support
- Project implementation & financing

Economic Development Office



Staffed by: Michael Sage

- Driving the region's economic strategy
- Moving from boom-bust to robust
- Creating jobs where people are rooted
- Accountable for regional impact

Transportation Office



Staffed by: Robert Kuipers

- Stewards of regional transportation planning
- Encouraging safe streets for all
- Ensuring increased mobility & accessibility
- Project implementation & financing





Data Dashboard

The COG is working rigorously to provide existing US Census data in an interactive mapping dashboard. Utilizing ESRI's ArcGIS Dashboard enables users to view geographic information, data to monitor events of Census, American Community Survey, pertinent data, see trends, and make decisions. Geoprocessing and other methods are necessary to provide a user-friendly environment of our northwest region of New Mexico, our COG. The dashboard is like web maps with charts, gauges, lists, tables, and indicators.

Special Projects Office

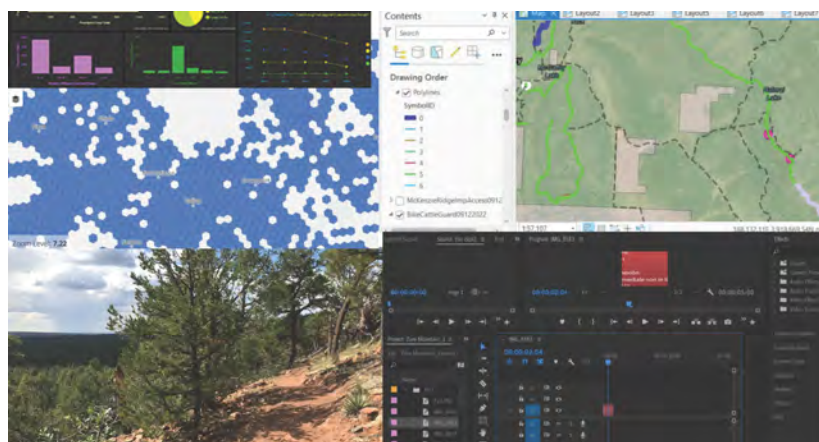
COG has restructured their office and one of the utmost importance is the Special Projects Office (SPO). The SPO serves the Northwest New Mexico region consisting of San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola counties including all municipal, rural, and tribal communities. This newly established Office will provide specialized skills and services that are not available or achievable in most communities in our region. This Office promotes data driven innovation and to develop programs that empower by sharing, communicating, and transferring knowledge to communities and the region.

The SPO would be a knowledge driver and center for the region and its communities. To that end, we envision promoting practices that advance adaptive management, improve communities, and reduce the efforts of filtering through informational material.

The SPO manager is tasked with the diversity of special projects that would entail data needs, storage, and utilizing multimedia sources. Currently the SPO is in the process of creating dashboards, interactive mapping, and updating US Census Designated Places. In addition, provide mapping services and multimedia services such as plotting maps, GPS surveying, film production, and varied formats. The SPO has an odd flowing range of tasks such as providing expertise towards:

- Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans
- US Census Participant Statistical Area Program
- Zuni Mountain Trails and Conservation
- NM Community Data Collaborative – Center for Health Innovation
- Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway Corridor
- Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Geographic Information System (GIS) technology applications
- Film production
- Adobe Creative Cloud digital design applications
- Other unique projects that come to the COG's Special Projects Office

The SPO is knowledge based and in time will have functioning capacities in interactive web use, data analysis, infographics, mapping, and other multitudes of information to share with the region. The SPO Manager will carry out on behalf of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG) in alignment with the organization vision to be the knowledge center for the region.



McKenzie Ridge Connector ~ Twin Springs Trail System Zuni Mountain Trails Project

Summer of 2022 Singletrack Trails, LLC, from Grand Junction, Colorado began trail construction north of McGaffey Lake but was then halted by the USFS Stage III Fire Restrictions. Monsoon season has lifted the fire restrictions and Singletrack has been able to reach the “horn or elbow” of McKenzie Ridge, elevation of approximately 8656'. Singletrack is preparing for construction on the ridge of McKenzie Ridge to Foster Canyon, then south of FR418 (unmaintained road). With terrain and potential weather the crew may have limited access into these areas. Although construction ought to go quickly due to large bedrock segments, slickrock. The future trail south of FR418 has reroutes and is still under USFS review for approval.

These proposed reroutes are designed for trail sustainability. The original trail layout plan, created over 10 years ago was approved for construction but ground truthing reveals very steep terrain that is not conducive to equestrians and mountain bikers. Forest Service experts will determine the proposed reroutes for approval or disapproval.

With a moist winter and spring season, US Forest Service pending approval of Task Order 3 has begun with Singletrack Trails, LLC. Singletrack is nearing Foster Canyon and a segment of the Continental Divide. Later this 2023 season south of Forest Road 418, are pending notice to proceed with Task Order 4 from USFS Mt. Taylor Ranger District, within

McKinley County. To be determined is the continuance of McKenzie Ridge Connector within the Twin Springs Trail System and proposed trailhead. Bluewater Creek Trail System would be east of the Twin Springs Trail System sometime to be built in the future. On another note the 24 Hour Enchanted Forest Bike Race had nearly 600 people register for the race. The race location was in the McGaffey and Hilso area trail systems at McGaffey Campground.

Visible from McKenzie Ridge are Mt. Powell, Mt. Taylor, Road 50, Haystack, Mt. Sedgwick, and portions of the Continental Divide. The McKenzie Ridge trail connector would dead end above Cottonwood Canyon but will continue, after design is determined and approved. This connector will continue above Cottonwood Canyon to the Rincon, to Peavine Canyon, and to the future Twin Springs Trailhead but will need future trail design work; this segment of trail is on both McKinley County and Cibola County.

Cibola County unbuilt trails of the Zuni Mountain Trail Project entail the Twin Springs, Bluewater, Ojo Redondo, Quartz Hill (partially built), and Limekiln Trail Systems. Trail designed for trail sustainability, proposed reroutes, await approval from the Forest Service. The Zuni Mountain Trails Project and Partners are continuously hopeful for these trail systems to be completed. Please enjoys these trails systems as that they are built for hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.



WATER & ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

Water Trust Board

COG provided technical assistance to member governments, including the City of Gallup and McKinley County, to submit grant applications for the Water Trust Fund, under the New Mexico Finance Authority. This is an annual grant program that provides funding for local/regional improvement and infrastructure projects, such as community centers, flood control, and water delivery systems.

For the recent 2023 Water Trust Board funding cycle, our region was awarded critical funding for local capital projects:

- The City of Gallup will receive \$10,800,000 for a new water well.
- The Catalpa Water Association will receive \$350,000 for project design.
- White Cliffs Mutual Domestic Water Users Association will receive \$1,685,419 for a new water storage tank and connecting lines.
- Ramah Water & Sanitation District was not awarded.

Water & Environment Office

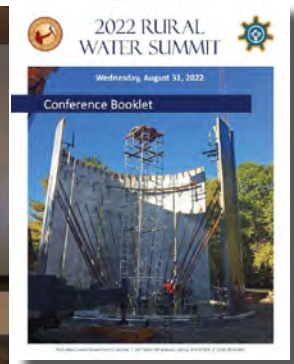
COG is currently moving forward and gaining traction with establishing its first office that is primarily focused on water and environment priorities for our region, with Angelina Grey, Planner, heading this program. The goal of this program is to take our efforts and attention on small water systems and brownfields and enhance regional initiatives that can be catalytic to creating major milestones in historic partnerships and support networks that puts our region on the map, literally. Ms. Grey has been working on developing this program to be succinct and aligned with the structure and framework of the RTPO program.

COG/RCAC Partnership

This is year two of the COG & RCAC partnership that was made possible through an EPA Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) grant that was secured by the NM Environment Department. COG and RCAC will continue providing technical assistance and support through outreach activities with small water systems. The goal is to incorporate this support network through our entire region whether it be through direct services or with contractual services with the NWNMUA.

Water Leadership Institute

The Regional Water Planning Organization of the COG helped organize the Water Leadership Institute that gives small water systems the opportunity to receive training that is crucial to the safe management and operation of water and wastewater systems. COG partnered with the Rural Communities Assistance Partnership network to facilitate a series of training sessions. This is the first time our region has hosted a program specific to small water systems.



Funding for Water & Wastewater

All the federal funding that is allocated under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) is being funneled through state agencies and departments. For NM, the funding is directed to NMED's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. Both programs are currently accepting both pre-applications and applications on a quarterly basis.

- Competitive, based on MHI
- Initially offered as loans with 0.01% interest rates (of total project cost), with some potential availability of grants

For CWSRF, 100% grants are awarded to severely low-income communities* (must qualify through census data calculations for medium household income, unemployment rate, and poverty rate (all must be higher than the national data))

McKinley County Water

In the final months of 2022, the County's Water Regionalization Initiative made tremendous progress in the formation of a "Joint Powers Agreement Entity." This initiative is more than 17 years in the making and the County, with its working partners, has reached a major milestone in establishing this historic partnership.

Three small water systems that have agreed to merge and create the Northwest New Mexico Utility Authority (NWNMUA):

- Gameraco Water & Sanitation District
- Yahtahey Water & Sanitation District
- White Cliffs Mutual Domestic Water Users Association. One member of the current board of directors for each joining entity has been selected to also serve as the board of directors for NWNMUA.

On another note, the COG continues to facilitate the Regional Water Commons (RWC) program with bi-monthly meetings. The previous RWC meeting was held in November that covered capital outlay priorities and other funding

programs that are currently available through the NM Environment Department (NMED). The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) is for wastewater projects and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) is for water projects.



Additionally, COG and the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) continue to provide technical assistance and outreach activities with regional small water system in both McKinley and Cibola Counties. In recollection, this partnership was established through the acquisition of the EPA WIIN grant more than a year ago. This is a 3-year work program that started in 2022 and will progress through 2024.

2022 Rural Water Summit

McKinley County recently held its second annual Rural Water Summit (RWS) in August, at the McKinley County Governance Center. COG organized all the logistics and catered luncheon (Grandma's Grill, Laguna, NM) for the 30+ participants. The newly appointed NM State Engineer, Mike A. Hamman, delivered the keynote address. Hamman touched on key factors that impact the northwestern region's current, future water, and climate outlook. Other topics covered included groundwater depletion of NM's major sources of surface water (i.e., Lower Rio Grande, Rincon Aquifer, Mesilla Valley). A major goal for all communities to prepare for climate change driven impacts to water resources across the state. Now is the time to enhance stewardship, sustainability and equity.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Four Corners Rapid Response Team

The COG engaged Los Alamos National Lab as part of the Four Corners Rapid Response Team. Engagement is hoped to bring forth additional resources to the region. The Rapid Response Team is a federal effort aimed at providing technical assistance to the northwest New Mexico region to expand regional capacity to undertake economic transformation and diversification in light of recent coal-fired power plant and associated coal mines.

Ft. Wingate Feasibility Study

COG is managing Indian Affiliates who are tasked with development of an Economic Feasibility Study for a parcel located on lands formerly under the control of Ft. Wingate. This study will help determine options for development and provide associated infrastructure cost. Coordination with the Eastern Regional Business Development Office for the Navajo Nation is occurring as part of the project.

EDA AURO Director Visits NM

Jorge Ayala, Director of EDA - Austin Regional Office which oversees the State of New Mexico, made a visit to New Mexico to meet with the NewMARC organization; the New Mexico Association of Regional Councils, to which the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments is a member.

The COG has invested considerable time and resources to cultivate a relationship with EDA-AURO which has produced significant investment into the region. It is hoped the partnership with EDA-AURO and Mr. Ayala can be leveraged for large transformative regional initiatives.

Industrial Workforce Program

Industrial Workforce Program (IWP) was developed for the purpose of training a career-ready workforce in the Greater Gallup region. The IWP initiative seeks to fill a shortfall in the community's capacity, readiness for economic

development, and to bridge the gap between the skills needed by local industrial employers and the actual skills represented in the community's workforce.

The IWP program emerged as an essential component of the economic development strategy for the Greater Gallup region, as reflected in Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation's (GGEDC) interviews and ongoing communications with the area's key industrial employers under its Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program. Area employers consistently identified "workforce" as their top challenge and further bemoaned (a) the lack of local applicants with the employability and industrial trades skills needed for their industries and (b) the lack of accessible training programs and resources with the flexibility and responsiveness needed for their hiring cycles.

Funded by the US EDA, the IWP pilot project partnered with local employers to identify core skills and specific abilities, followed by building a responsive program, thus striving to provide a sustainable pipeline of work-ready applicants to fill current and future industrial jobs needed by the employers. This critical relationship with industrial employers was further embodied in the program's "Leadership Team" composed of representatives from local employers who worked with the GGEDC staff team to review, advise on, approve program policies, budgets, curricula, certification paths, training plans, and approaches aligned with the needs of industry.

The GGEDC proceeded to activate the IWP Leadership Team, identify and access appropriate funding resources, hire staff, design program, tailor NCCER curriculum and certification requirements to local labor needs, build inter-agency partnerships, put in place a trainee recruitment program, and initiate scheduling and implementation of training courses.



Economic Development Office

The Economic Development Office is tasked with the management of base economic development programs as well as special initiatives. The Economic Development Office works at a regional level, interfacing with local communities and their respective local economic development organizations to help expand local capacity to successfully implement projects.

Northwest New Mexico is a recognized by the US Economic Development Administration (US EDA) as a federal economic development district and the NWNMCOG is responsible for developing and maintaining a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) on behalf of the region.

The CEDS serves as roadmap to help identify and prioritize economic development initiatives for the region including economic development projects and serves as a guide for US EDA to help prioritize federal investments, resources, and technical support. In 2024, the NWNMCOG is expected to begin the process of updating the CEDS which is in line with recommendations to update the document every 5 years.

The NWNMCOG maintains close communication and coordination with the US EDA as it seeks federal investments into the region to the benefit of local communities and economic development projects. Assistance to Coal Communities, Economic Adjustment and Public Works, VISTA Volunteers, and the Revolving Loan Fund are just a few of the US EDA programs successfully accessed by the NWNMCOG to support regional economic development initiatives.

Aztec Outdoor Recreation Project

The Aztec OR Project represents a special initiative for the economic development office, as funding is largely tied to a one-time appropriation, in this case, a legislative capital outlay appropriation. With the Aztec OR project, efforts are centered around the development of an outdoor recreation manufacturing facility in the City of Aztec which is designed to complement recent investments made by the city to the Aztec Motocross Park as well

as North Main intended to improve access to the Animas River. The NWNMCOG is providing technical assistance to the city to help complete project scoping while working with local outdoor recreation manufacturers to forge public-private partnerships to facilitate business expansion and job creation.

Revolving Loan Fund

NWNMCOG Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) was re-established in 2021 with funding provided by the US EDA. The RLF is to improve access to capital for businesses and individuals in support of business, job creation including retention and expansion. The RLF program has available \$900,000 in capitalization and can make loans ranging from \$20,000 - \$100,000.

For FY22-23, with a focused concentration on San Juan County, the RLF had contact with approximately 103 companies in northwest New Mexico. Contact included direct one-to-one outreach including providing verbal overview of the RLF program and RLF marketing materials. Approximately 80% of businesses contacted were in San Juan County.

The NWNMCOG Board of Directors made the innovative decision to lower the interest rate on the RLF program to the lowest allowable under RLF rules and regulations. The resulting decision to set rates at Wall Street Journal Prime minus Four Points has been instrumental in driving interest in the program.

With assistance of the National Development Council (NDC), the RLF program has 7 projects under consideration all in various stages of financial review. All 7 projects are based in San Juan County, with an average funding request of \$98,000.

	Businesses	Prospects*
Cibola County	4	0
McKinley County	17	0
San Juan County	82	7
TOTAL	103	7

* As of 6/30/23

The RLF was featured in local publications including the Farmington Daily Times and the Durango Herald



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION OFFICE

RTPO Program

Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization

There are seven (7) RTPO's in New Mexico; these organizations – typically part of regional Councils of Governments, help multi-county regions manage multimodal transportation planning, funding and project development. This includes pedestrian, bicycle, roadway, highway, bus, rail and airline infrastructure and services, as well as outdoor trail design, development and maintenance.

Our NWRTPO serves and has representatives from McKinley, San Juan and Cibola Counties, Cities of Gallup, Grants, and Village of Milan, and Native Tribes including Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna and Pueblo of Zuni, and Ramah Navajo.

The NWRTPO meets on a monthly basis to plan and report progress on multi-modal transportation development and maintenance. Many projects require multi-jurisdictional collaboration, as they may cross a number of different local, county, tribal, state and federal jurisdictions. RTPO's and MPO's (Metropolitan Planning Organization) work with our New Mexico Department of Transportation, to execute development based on local and regional priorities, and collaborate to find and secure funding for a variety of projects. The Farmington MPO in San Juan County serves the Cities of Farmington, Bloomfield, Aztec, and Kirtland.

Carbon Coal Road

Carbon Coal Road is providing access to the Industrial Park opportunities in the former Gamera Mine area. This paved four-lane road extends from the intersection with US491 in Gamera for 5.5 miles to where coal is still off-loading for transport to regional power plants.

The project in this area is to invite industry, including energy production along with potential for an inland port to involve warehousing for the exchange of cargo between rail and freight delivery to the broader Four-Corners multi-state region.

I-40 Planning Grants

The NWRTPO submitted nine (9) I-40 Planning Projects, seeking funding for future development, as funding becomes available. Some of these projects could be locally driven, but because they intersect with Interstate 40, most of them will also involve NMDOT and federal oversight.

The proposed projects for I-40 from the Arizona State line almost to Albuquerque include:

- McKinley Autonomous Commercial & Mobility Complex
- McKinley Commercial Truck Testing Technology Corridor
- McKinley I-40 Prewitt Industrial Park Connectivity and Rail Crossing
- McKinley I-40 / NM371 / NM612 Interchange
- McKinley Williams Acres I-40 Noise Barrier,
- McKinley Supply Chain Accelerator
- Gallup I-40 / NM118 East and West Interchanges
- Milan I-40 / NM568 Sawmill Road Interchanges
- Milan I-40 / Horizon Blvd. Interchange.



NMDOT Transportation Project Fund (TPF)

In recent years, the State Legislature and NMDOT initiated a NM State fund for transportation projects, with no functional classification limits, and funding distributed based on justified local government priorities (Counties, Tribes, Communities and Special Districts).

The Transportation Project Fund from the State of New Mexico only requires a 5% local match and allows a match waiver to be requested.

The 2023 third round of TPF funding, our region was awarded \$19,747,334 for 10 projects – 2 from the Farmington MPO governments, and 8 projects from 8 of our NWRTPO member governments. This funding has doubled and at times almost tripled the amount of funding our NWRTPO region receives on a biennial basis for multi-modal transportation development.

NM State Planning & Research Funding Awards

For the 2023 NM State Planning and Research Fund, the NWRTPO was awarded \$250,000 (\$200,000 – state / \$50,000 – 20% local match) for the McKinley County Transportation Master Plan; and \$150,000 (\$120,000 – state / \$30,000 local match) for the Grants/Milan Comprehensive Transportation Safety Action Plan. This represents another \$400,000 in funding for transportation planning on behalf of McKinley County and the communities of Grants and Milan.

Technical Support and Data Management:

- Trail Counters: Carrie House invested considerable time this past quarter installing trail counters for our Zuni Mountains Recreational Trails project.
- TOA Byway CMP Update: Carrie also commenced some prep work for our 2024 update to the Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway - Corridor Management Plan.

Project Development & Monitoring:

- April 14 PFF Deadline: Extensive work with RTPPO members to get their PFF's submitted by this deadline. Had to allow an extension for some tribal members. After the April 14 meeting – worked with our members for PFF corrections. Extensive follow up with DOT District 6 to complete PFF approvals so we can move forward with PPF's.
- City of Grants MAP Project: Support of the City of Grants' Municipal Arterial Project funding application.
- Gallup Transportation Master Plan: Participation for this plan on May 17.
- Funding & Training: Ongoing funding and training opportunities to our RTPPO members. Ramah Navajo received \$21,424,232.00 for 6.5 miles of reconstruction to BIA Rt. 125, includes bike and pedestrian infrastructure.



GRANT WRITING PROGRAM

DFA Capacity Building Appropriation

During the 2022 Legislative session, legislators throughout New Mexico supported the need to address local challenges related to grant writing and grant management both as a reaction to current grant programs and in anticipation of incoming large federal investment opportunities. The result of legislative efforts was an appropriation of \$1,500,000 to the Department of Finance and Administration to implement the Capacity Building Program.

The COG quickly developed an approach that would provide the most efficient and effective use of funds as they need to be spent and closed by June 2023. What resulted was an invitation to member governments to participate in the following scope-of-services:

1. Assist local governments in defining and prioritizing projects.
2. Assist local governments to match funding opportunities with projects to create comprehensive funding strategies.
3. Hire multiple contract grant writers who will focus on writing grant applications that can be used when the grant opens and applications that can be recycled for other projects in the future.
4. Identification of technical documents needed which require complex technical skills and data sets to develop.
5. Contracts with engineering or technical firms to provide technical documentation.

Ultimately, the Village of Milan, City of Grants, City of Gallup, Cibola County, and McKinley bought into the program and were successful in securing \$50,000 each to roll into the COG grant writing program.

With 1 year to implement, the COG quickly established the program and has since task ordered the following applications and grant guides:

Village of Milan

1. Milan Wastewater Improvement Project – completed Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund application.
2. Stanley Bridge & Road Improvements – completed and submitted a Transportation Project Fund application.
3. Project Feasibility Form (PFF) and Project Prospectus Form (PPF) – Applications completed and submitted including Tietjen Street and required documentation e.g. cost estimates.
4. Elkins Road (CR-24) – Application guide created to Safe Streets For All Program
5. Milan Industrial Park Improvements
 - a. State LEDA Application – update this application but not the priority in short-term.
 - b. EDA Application – updated and ready to submit this application.
 - c. Other strategies and applications defined for the Village.

City of Grants

1. Grants City-wide Water and Wastewater Project – completed both applications:
 - a. Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund application
 - b. Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund application
2. Gunderson Road – completed and submitted a Transportation Project Fund application(s) based on City direction.
3. Project Feasibility Form (PFF) and Project Prospectus Form (PPF) – Applications completed and submitted including required documentation e.g. cost estimates.
4. Lobo Canyon Road (NM547) Improvement Project & Multi-purpose Path – completed the update 2018 Federal Lands Access Program application.
5. Sakelares Boulevard
 - a. Application guide completed to Safe Streets For All Program and RURAL Program



City of Gallup

1. Allison Corridor - Developed funding strategies related to Allison Corridor Part A and drafted an application for about \$12M to the Reconnecting Communities Program.
2. Route 66 Downtown Road Diet - Continued to support the Route 66 Downtown Road Diet Project and developed a guide for the Safe Street for All program.
3. 2nd & 3rd Streets Rail Crossings - Investigated gap financing needed and funding options for 2nd & 3rd Pedestrian Safety Crossings including Railroad Elimination Program but this project did not qualify.

Cibola County

1. CR5 Moquino Bridge - Support of a Transportation Project Fund Application for County Road 5 Moquino Llano Bridge and Road Rehabilitation Project.
2. Broadband - Support of a USDA Broadband RECONNECT led by Continental Divide Cooperative.
3. Grants Support - Funding through this contract was also used to support several grant applications for the City of Grants and Village of Milan.
4. Acoma Support - Support and research of several targets for the Mesa Hill Bridge Project including support from Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railway.
5. Brownfields - funding support for several projects in Cibola County including Acoma Day School.
6. Railroad Elimination Program - Created guides for completing and competing for a Railroad Elimination Program and the Bridge Investment Program. A draft application is being finalized for several railroad crossings sites in Cibola County.

McKinley County

1. CR43 Superman Canyon Bridge #1 - Support of a Transportation Project Fund Application for County on Superman Canyon Bridge.
2. Rail Crossings - Support and research of several targets for several crossings including support from Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railway.
3. EV Charging Stations - Completed and

- submitted applications for \$6M for three charging stations under the Community Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) grant programs.
4. Brownfields - funding support for several projects in McKinley County including Prewitt Industrial Park and several County led-projects.
5. Railroad Crossing Elimination - Created guides for completing and competing for a Railroad Elimination Program and the Bridge Investment Program. A draft application is being finalized for several railroad crossings site in McKinley County.
6. Bridges - Supported and reviewed the County's application for 10 bridge construction projects through the Bridge Investment Program.
7. Carbon Coal South - Exploring options for funding the Carbon Coal Road South project.

Overall, the initial year of the COG's grant writing program has produced significant benefit to participating members. Not only did grant applications get developed, but new relationships were also formed, data was collected, knowledge was acquired, and money was saved.

During the 2023 Legislative Session, the legislature once again appropriated funding for the continuation of this grant program through the DFA and once again, the COG was swift to promote our successful first year run of our grant writing program. The following member governments were successful in securing \$30,000 from the DFA Capacity Building funding to continue and/or participate in the COG's program: Village of Milan, City of Grants, City of Gallup, City of Aztec, City of Bloomfield, Cibola County and McKinley County.

The COG will seek intergovernmental services agreements with participating members and will set up consultations to identify projects and grants programs and will soon deploy resources to complete applications. We look forward to another year of grant writing success.





STAFF

Your Team



Evan Williams
Executive Director



Michael Sage
Economic Development
Program Manager



Martina Whitmore
Administrative Assistant



Brandon Howe
Lead Planner



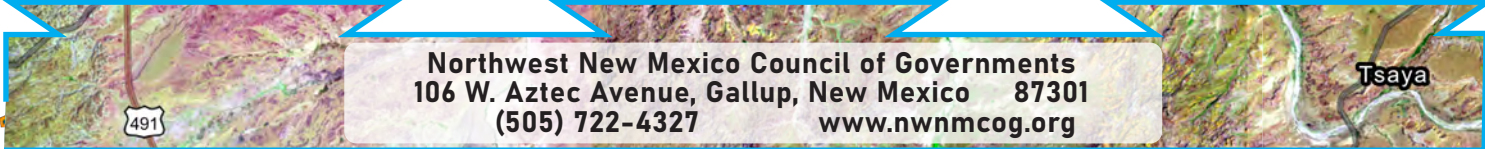
Angelina Grey
Associate Planner



Robert Kuipers
RTPO Program Manager



Carrie House
Associate Planner



Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments
106 W. Aztec Avenue, Gallup, New Mexico 87301
(505) 722-4327 www.nwnmcog.org

Tsaya