



Connecting the Dots

October - December 2023

Table of Contents

Director’s Note.....1

Water Planning Office Update.....2

Transportation Office Update.....3

Economic Development Office Update.....3

Special Projects Update.....3

State Grant in Aid Update.....4

Regional Investments - COG Performance Review.....5

Director's Note

Serving Our Region

The COG team continues to perform as we are extremely proud of serving our region and wanted to provide some key highlights.

Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans – 100+

- Counties – 3
- Municipalities – 7
- Pueblos – 3
- Navajo Chapters – 51
- Special Districts – 38
- Senior Centers – 42



Evan Williams

Capital Outlay Requests & Reauthorizations – 75+

Legislative Forums – 2

- Cibola Area Legislative Forum
- Gallup-McKinley Area Legislative Forum

Exceling on Special Projects

- Water Commons Program – NADO Award
- Central 66 MRA Blight Assessment Report
- Zuni Mountains Quality Assurance Work
- Grants-Milan Transportation Safety Action Plan
- McKinley County Transportation Master Plan

Grant Awards

- Economic Development Administration – \$4M
- Regional Recreational Grants – \$8M+
- Community Development Block Grant – \$1.5M
- Economic Recovery Program Grants – \$2.5M
- Capacity Building Grants – \$440K



Water Planning Office Update



SMALL SYSTEM SUPPORT

The COG's Regional Water Planning Organization (RWPO) office has recently established working partnerships with the New Mexico Environment Department, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) and the Southwest Environmental Finance Center (SWEFC) to help rural communities with education and training on compliance and regulations required for small systems (e.g. financial audits, reporting).

This partnership is a community-based approach to providing much needed technical assistance (TA) that is focused on getting small systems back on track with compliance standing and being eligible for critical funding programs.

The COG/RWPO's previous partnership with RCAC allowed for a full understanding of all requirements and regulatory compliances that all small systems should be following. Through trainings and meetings with small systems, the RWPO and RCAC were able to provide TA in financial and technical capacities. Through education, communities are able to understand roles and responsibilities in all areas of small

systems management (i.e., financial, organizational, managerial and technical).

The RWPO partnership first established working relationships with small systems in McKinley County. The next focus is contacting small systems in Cibola County, and are currently assisting three small systems with financial audits, discharge permitting, and compliance issues. Additional meetings will be scheduled with other small systems that have reached out and requested help.

NMFA LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING FUND

The COG/RWPO is assisting two small systems with the completion and final submission of the NMFA Local Government Planning Fund (LGPf) applications, requesting funding to develop Preliminary Engineering Reports (PER) for both Gamerco Water & Sanitation District and Yahtahey Water & Sanitation District.

Gamerco WSD is looking to develop a PER for a new water well. Land acquisition and the environmental and archeological studies will not be necessary as the selected site for the new well is owned by GWSD. The RWPO is currently working with GWSD office staff and accountant in securing required supporting documents to determine level of eligibility. If GWSD is considered a disadvantaged community, GWSD could qualify for a 100% grant, without any match fund requirement.

Yahtahey WSD is looking to develop a PER for its lagoon remediation project. Land acquisition and the environmental and archeological studies will not be necessary as the proposed new lagoons will be reconstructed at existing site. The RWPO is currently working with GWSD office staff and accountant in securing required supporting documents to determine level of eligibility. If YWSD is considered a disadvantaged community, YWSD could qualify for a 100% grant, without any match fund requirement.

WATER TRUST BOARD

The COG/RWPO is assisting two local governments (members) and one small system with the completion and final submission of the NMFA Water Trust Board (WTB) applications. The application cycle is currently in progress. The Readiness Application opened the first part of December and has a deadline at the end of January 2024.

Water Planning Office Update

The City of Gallup is looking to request funding to replace existing (and aging) cast iron, cement asbestos and iron ductile pipelines at eight separate locations throughout the city. The loan/grant/match percentages are still to be determined.

McKinley County is looking to request funding to replace an existing crossing along Superman Canyon Road (County Road 43). The loan/grant/match percentages are still to be determined.

The Ramah Water & Sanitation District is looking to request funding to complete project design for its water infrastructure improvement project. The loan/grant/match percentages are still to be determined.

LEAD & COPPER RULE (LCR) SERVICE LINE INVENTORY TRAINING

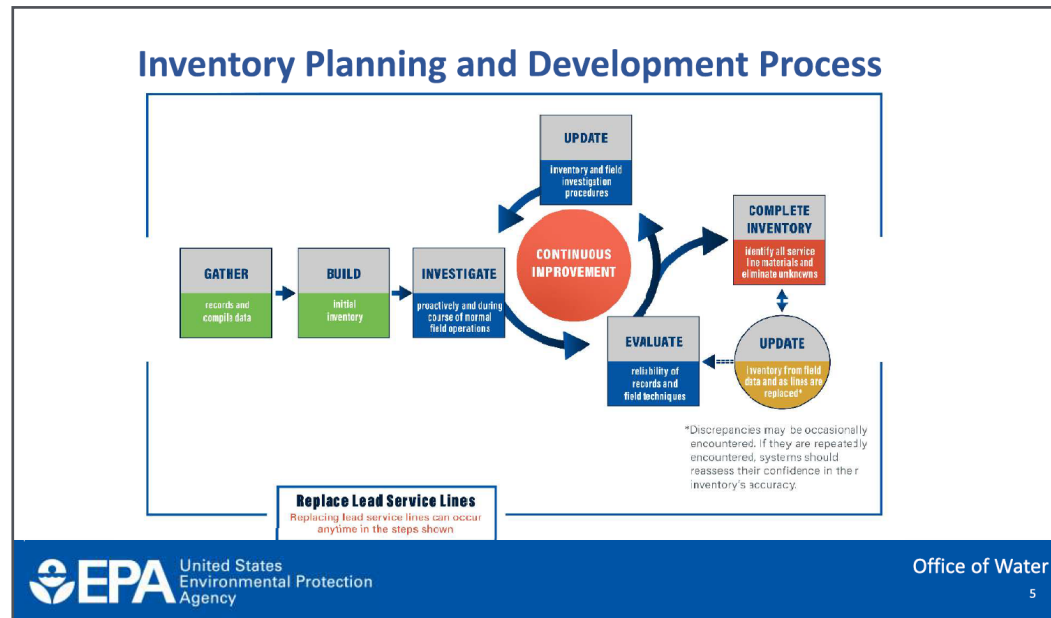
The COG/RWPO and its standing partners with NMED, RCAC and SWEFC are organizing and facilitating free training for small systems to complete and submit service line inventories. Following the disaster in Flint, Michigan with lead-contaminated water, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made revisions to its Lead and Copper Rule

(LCR). The Service Line Inventory is now a federal requirement. All public water systems are now required to inventory ALL service lines, including both the public and private side (residential). The deadline to submit is October 16, 2024.

The first training was held in October for McKinley County-area small systems. Training was attended by four small systems and their office staff and the City of Gallup's water department. The next scheduled trainings are as follows:

- Cibola County: Wednesday, January 31, 2024, from 9:00AM to 1:00PM. Training will be held at the Bluewater Community Center, in Bluewater, NM.
- San Juan County: Wednesday, February 21, 2024, from 9:00AM to 1:00PM. Training will be held at the McGee Park/San Juan County Fairgrounds, in Farmington, NM.

For more information on these trainings or other priorities, please contact Angelina Grey at (505) 722-4327.



Transportation Office Update

GRANTS-MILAN TRANSPORTATION SAFETY ACTION PLAN

- In September – just before this quarter, Paige Wolfrom of Wilson & Co. provided us the stakeholder committee for the safety action plan which includes representation from Grants and Milan leaders, DOT Dist. 6, Cibola Schools, Milan and Grants Police and Fire Departments.
- The intent of this plan is to increase multi-modal transportation safety throughout the communities, including the interface with Interstate 40 which runs through both communities.
- Wilson & Co. held the project kick off meeting on September 11, and held its first stakeholder meeting on November 29 at 1:30 pm.
- To date Wilson & Co. has undertaken preliminary data collection and analysis, along with crash analysis including downtown sites, crash mapping and data summary tables.
- The RFP Scope of work includes the following:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish leadership & engage stakeholders. • Develop a public engagement plan include pedestrians, bicyclists, and disabled persons. • Review existing relevant plans. • Use a data driven process, address high incidence areas, consider land use, environmental, socio-economic and population data. Consider future growth. • Consider cost estimates, design and supporting documentation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a multi-modal approach including roads, trails, transit, railroad, pedestrian, and bicycles. • Set measures & targets for system performance; identify strategies and countermeasures. • Prepare and implement a safety plan with short / mid / long term goals, funding sources, action timelines, tracking tools, checklists & dashboards. • Consider financial support from the Safe Streets & Roads for All program, and Railroad Crossing Elimination program. |
|--|---|

The condensed Scope of Work from Wilson & Co. includes the following:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a leadership team • Develop a Public Engagement Plan • Review Existing Plans • Collect and analyze safety data • Engage a multi-modal approach for all system users – roads, trails, transit, railroad, pedestrian & bicycle facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set measures and targets for system performance • Engage countermeasures checklist • Prepare and implement a safety plan • Implement the plan and update progress • Inform community members / stakeholders on vision, design, costs and construction. |
|---|--|

- Wilson & Co. to hold a public meeting in January, and their next stakeholder meeting in March. In the mean time they continue researching high accident incidence areas, potential future growth areas, and places where safety modifications might be merited.

GALLUP TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

This plan has engaged three (3) stakeholder meetings and one public meeting thus far. Key elements follow:

- Gather regional traffic data to support recommendations – the plan should be data driven and community informed.
- Define existing multimodal network and collect public and stakeholder input on areas of concern.
- Try to forecast future system capacity demands and potential deficiencies. Consider growth areas and impacts on traffic.
- Consider all community influences on multi-modal traffic development. Identify system gaps and key areas for development including land use, housing, commercial areas, workforce and traffic impact analysis.
- Engage citizens, leaders, stakeholders, businesses, schools, police, fire stations, Navajo Nation and government entities.
- Consider multimodal development around mobility and safety issues for system performance, including potential congestion, emergency corridors, traffic conditions & issues, potential growth impacts and multimodal interface.
- Consider areas for pedestrian and traffic interface.
- Consider interface of major arterials with housing and school areas.

Stakeholder Meetings:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional routes • More funding • State to better manage their roads • Better public transportation • Improve access to Gallup northside – only 2 bridges over the BNSF rail line and Rio Puerco at this time • Address traffic jams on Munoz Overpass | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross street access to US 491 • Loop US491 to I-40 • Drainage improvements & safer intersections • Better access to airport • Solution to downtown rail crossings • Pavement improvements (lots of potholes) |
|--|---|

- Priorities: 1) Safety, 2) Efficiency, 3) Connectivity, 4) Maintenance, 5) Multimodal / Complete Streets.
- Stakeholder Outcome Recommendations:

Transportation Office Update

Public Meetings:

- Public Priorities: Road maintenance / Congestion / Speeding / Train crossings / Signals / Bike lanes.
- Public Improvement Recommendations: Additional roadway connections / Increased roadway maintenance / Safer intersections / Better roadway drainage / Better public transit connections.
- Provided a map where stakeholders could respond and comment including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential conflict areas • Alternative connection areas • Multi-modal opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevated safety consideration areas • Future land use highlights • Opportunity for additional comments
---	--

MCKINLEY TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

- Staff developed a condensed summary for the Scope of Work for the next phase of the McKinley Transportation Master Plan. This plan will consider growth opportunities within the County, including potential projects such as the 4CITE, and potential inland port – related to a new 4-lane paved road from Gamerco to the former mine area.
- The project kick-off meeting with McKinley County, COG staff, and Bohannon Huston staff took place on October 10, including Rodney Skersick – McK Road Superintendent, Robert Kuipers – NMWNCOG, Denise Aten / Derrick Webb / Liz Treat of Bohannon Huston, and Jim Townsend and Noah Berke of Wilson & Co. Topics covered include project purpose, scope of work and timelines.

Initial / current work:	Immediate Needs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engagement Prep ✓ Project website ✓ Branding ✓ Engagement plan ✓ Existing conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Check in frequency / scheduling ✓ Engagement plan review ✓ Stakeholder list buildout ✓ Tentative stakeholder and public meeting scheduling ✓ Stakeholder – initial virtual kickoff meeting ✓ Stakeholder / Public – initial in-person meeting date

RTIPR UPDATE

Staff have completed the draft RTIPR which was reviewed by our regional RTPO representatives from 10 participating regional governments at our December 13 meeting. At this meeting we simply presented the draft RTIPR; at our next meeting – February 14, we will approve and authorize our 2024 RTIPR, perhaps with a few project additions or edits.

TRANSIT APPLICATIONS

NWRTPO staff have received FFY2024 public transit funding applications from our five regional 5311 public transit providers which include:

- Gallup Express
- Laguna Shaars'kra Transit
- Navajo Transit
- Zuni Ashiwi Transit
- Milan Rockin 66 Transit

At our December 13 virtual meeting, we heard 10 minute presentations from each of these public transit providers seeking funding, and our members executed scoring sheets for each provider, which in turn COG RTPO staff will consolidate these for total scores and submit to NMDOT Transit & Rail.



Economic Development Office Update

Project:

The City of Farmington is requesting \$500k to extend its "Animas River Trail" system which currently consists of 9.5 miles of trail along the Animas River from the confluence of the Animas & San Juan Rivers to our Animas Park & Nature Center. The trail system provides a keynote experience to residents & visitors. The City is soliciting funds for the construction of an additional 1.7 miles (8840') of trail that will connect it to the signature "Gateway Park" and museum/visitors center at the core of Farmington.

Impact:

Having lost thousands of jobs due to the decline in fossil energy markets (gas & coal), the City struggles to retain and attract workforce. These "quality of place" amenities are critical to keeping and drawing new residents and supporting our local businesses. The tourism and outdoor industries are also key targets for diversification in the community. This is crucial to our recovery as we seek new employers to keep our residents employed and visitors engaged.

Animas River Trail Northern Extension



TRANSITION - First and foremost, we wanted to report that Michael Sage has chosen to move on to a job with the State Land Office and his duties will transition to the Executive Director for the time being. Michael has been a pillar at the COG on and off since 2007 and a tremendous leader for the region. A couple top bill items:

HIRING! - Help us get the word out about Job Openings

<https://www.nwnmcog.org/employment-opportunities.html>

PROGRAMS - The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update process is delayed and are reviewing capacity needs for the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program. A final detailed report and presentation was delivered on October 18, 2023 at the COG Board meeting. https://www.nwnmcog.org/uploads/1/2/8/7/12873976/ppt_10.18.23_cog_board_meeting_public.pdf

RLF UPDATE - The program continues to operate and be evaluated. Over 200 business visits were conducted to market the program directly to potential customers over the last several years. The COG is working on two deals that should be reviewed by the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Committee in early January.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY AWARDS - In 2021, the New Mexico Legislature created a fund, program, and process to assist communities being negatively affected by energy sector and mining downturns. In early FY2024, the Department of Finance & Administration (DFA) announced a grant application to select projects for funding from this \$6M pot entitled Economic Recovery Program. Here are the projects from our region that were submitted and successfully approved by the State Community Development Council (CDC). Special thanks to our members and to former Commissioner and COG Board Member Carol Bowman-Muskett, our District 1 CDC Representative. Here are the presentations and projects from City of Farmington, McKinley County, and Village of Milan.

Request: \$1M (Economic Recovery Funds)
Requestor: McKinley County

McKINLEY COUNTY
Robert Baca, Chairman
Anthony Dimas Jr., Manager



Project Title: RMCH Hospital Improvement Project

- Brief Narrative:** Based on the Facility audit, about \$10M of critical improvements were identified for the hospital. These improvements were phased into 4 Projects that include: Cooling Towers and Controls, HVAC Controls, HVAC Upgrades, and Lighting and Energy Efficiency.
- Source Intent:** Our hospital is an economic driver and community lifeline. Downturns and closures in the energy and coal sectors have crippled our economy and tax base. This investment will help sustain our hospital, which one of top issues in recruitment, retention, and expansion of industry and business in our community. This is the top investment that will provide a hand-up to our community to sustain its hospital and rebound its economy.
- Community benefits:** It will provide an investment to sustain operations and continue our community's access to a Critical Access Hospital. Other benefits listed in CDBG presentation.
- The County's funding strategy to raise this and the progress to date is:
 - Capital Outlay - \$5.8M appropriated in 2023. (Secured)
 - Capital Outlay - \$1.2M reauthorized from another project in 2023. (Secured)
 - CDBG - \$825,000 sought including \$750,000 and \$75,000 local match (Pending)
 - Economic Recovery Funding (\$1M) (Pending)



Request: \$1M (Economic Recovery Funds)
Requestor: Village of Milan

VILLAGE OF MILAN, NM
Felix Gonzales, Mayor
Linda Cooke, Manager



Project Title: Milan Industrial Park Mill Road and Roadway Improvements

- Brief Narrative:** This investment will provide funding to build-out the roadway network at the Milan Industrial Park. The Park was master planned and designed to provide the region a shovel-ready industrial site to locate new and expanding businesses. The project will construct the main access road into the Park.
- Source Intent:** Downturns and closures in the energy and coal sectors have crippled our economy and tax base including the about 90 of the 105 jobs related to the Escalante Generating Station in Prewitt. This investment will help develop a new asset for the attraction, retention, and expansion of industry and business in our community. This is the top investment that will provide a hand-up to our community to move our economy from boom-bust to robust and create quality jobs where people are rooted.
- Community benefits:** It will provide a community asset needed for economic development. It is projected that this project will create and sustain 54 jobs and attract \$3.2 million in private investment.
- The Village's funding strategy to raise this and the progress to date is:
 - US Economic Development Administration (EDA) - \$2.7M awarded (Secured)
 - DFA Federal Matching Fund Program - \$600K awarded. (Secured)
 - Economic Recovery Funding (\$1M) (Pending)

Total (\$4.3M) and project can be scaled accordingly



Milan, NM, the former carrot capital of the world is trying to diversify its economy; new federal funding should help

Economic Development Office Update



PREWITT INDUSTRIAL PARK

COG continues to manage a partnership between Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation, McKinley County Electric Generating Facility Economic Development District, and Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation in association with McKinley County and private partners to complete a final design for this industrial park. The project partners have committed \$800,000 in private sector funding made available via Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association community assistance fund.

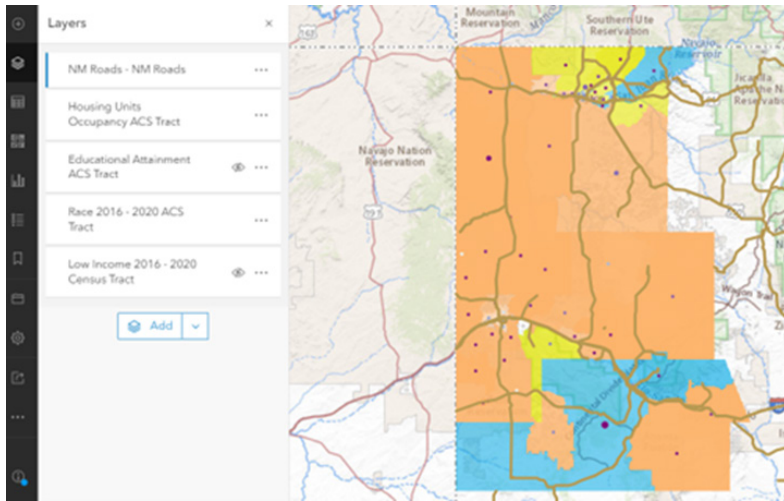
In related news, COG Executive Director did participate in a ceremony for the Escalante Solar Project that will result in a 200MG solar facility on November 9, 2023.



FORT WINGATE MARKET FEASIBILITY STUDY

COG working with Navajo Nation completed a market feasibility study for potential re-use and redevelopment of a parcel of the Fort Wingate Army Depot that was returned to the Navajo Nation. This study was underwritten by the US Economic Development Administration through its Assistance to Coal Communities program.

Special Projects Office Update



SAN JUAN COUNTY CDBG

COG partnered with San Juan County in the development of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the American with Disabilities with various facilities improvement projects. Projects are to improve accessibility at some fire stations, a senior center, Salmon Ruins Museum, and McGee Park facilities. Funding approval is expected from State of New Mexico's Department of Finance Administration, Community Development Council.

ZUNI MOUNTAIN TRAILS

The Milk Ranch, Hilso, and McGaffey trail systems near Gallup continues to be used by equestrians, mountain bikers, and hikers. Years of trail improvements have attracted an increase in the local community to worldwide visitors. The McKenzie Ridge Connector (within the Twin Springs trail system) began trail construction in 2022. The US Forest Service had to briefly halt construction due to extreme fire conditions and pending archaeological studies. Portions of McKenzie Ridge Connector awaits US Forest Service heritage final approval to complete the entire 33-mile connector with an expected completion date of fall 2024. The remaining Twin Springs trail system, approximately 30 miles, needs further studies and review by the US Forest Service.



The Quartz Hill trail system near Grants has also increased with trail users. Quartz Hill trail system has some constructed trails, but other trails are pending further construction, as well as the trailhead.

Near Zuni Mountain trail system are neighboring Gallup Trails, High Desert Trails, Continental Divide trails, Uphill Quad trail, and Gooseberry Springs trails.

Beyond the Zuni Mountain trails, Gallup, and Grants area trails are in the Farmington area and on the Navajo Nation within our northwest New Mexico region.

EDO DASHBOARD

The Economic Development Office manager, Michael Sage, has left our COG team and we wish him well in his future opportunities. The Special Projects Office of the COG has gained important insights from Michael that will transform economic data to an interactive data dashboard. Accessing data and utilizing ArcGIS has been in the works, sometime in the future will fruition onto the COG website

State Grant in Aid Update

LEGISLATIVE FORUMS

As part of our annual agreement with the State of New Mexico, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments provides a vast array of legislative assistance to communities of Northwest New Mexico. During the 2nd quarter of FY24, the COG focused legislative efforts on coordinating and hosting two legislative forums.

The first forum was held on November 22nd in Cibola County at the Village of Milan Administrative Offices. The forum provided the opportunity for area governments, tribal entities, and partner organizations to present legislative priorities to area legislators. The Cibola Area Legislative Forum was well attended, and a wealth of information was shared. Senators George Munoz and Joshua Sanchez attended along with Representative Harry Garcia. Presentations were provided by the Village of Milan, City of Grants, Cibola County, Pueblo of Acoma, Ramah Navajo Chapter, NMSU Grants, Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation, Grants Mainstreet, and the Cibola



Trail Alliance.

The second forum was held on December 20 in McKinley County at the City of Gallup Administrative. Structured identical to the Cibola forum, the Gallup-McKinley County Legislative Forum provided the opportunity for local entities to present to area legislators on priority projects, statewide legislation, and provided the opportunity to introduce new programs and initiatives to area partners. Senator George Munoz and Representatives Patty Lundstrom, Wonda Johnson, and Eliseo Alcon

were in attendance. Presentations were made by the City of Gallup, McKinley County, UNM-Gallup, Gallup McKinley County Schools, Northwest New Mexico Regional Solid Waste Authority, Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital, Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce, Gallup ARTS, and Gallup Mainstreet. Our office also took the opportunity to present the New Mexico Association of Regional Council's legislative request which includes increasing the annual appropriation given to state planning districts.



CAPITAL OUTLAY

Simultaneously, the COG initiated our annual capital outlay technical assistance effort. Prior to the quarter, COG staff attended virtual trainings provided by DFA Local Government Division and the Legislative Council Services to ready for our annual technical assistance push. To date, the COG planning team has engaged in outreach to offer assistance to special districts and tribal entities including Navajo Nation Chapters. Carrie House has been assigned the lead planner to assist capital outlay needs in San Juan, Angelina Grey has been assigned to assist McKinley County and Robert Kuipers has been assigned to support Cibola entities. Lead Planner Brandon Howe has taken on member government assistance and has since met individually with most member governments to identify priorities, outline strategies, and develop and submit capital requests.

As the session begins, the COG will continue to offer legislative assistance to help entities navigate the upcoming 30-day session.

State Grant in Aid Update

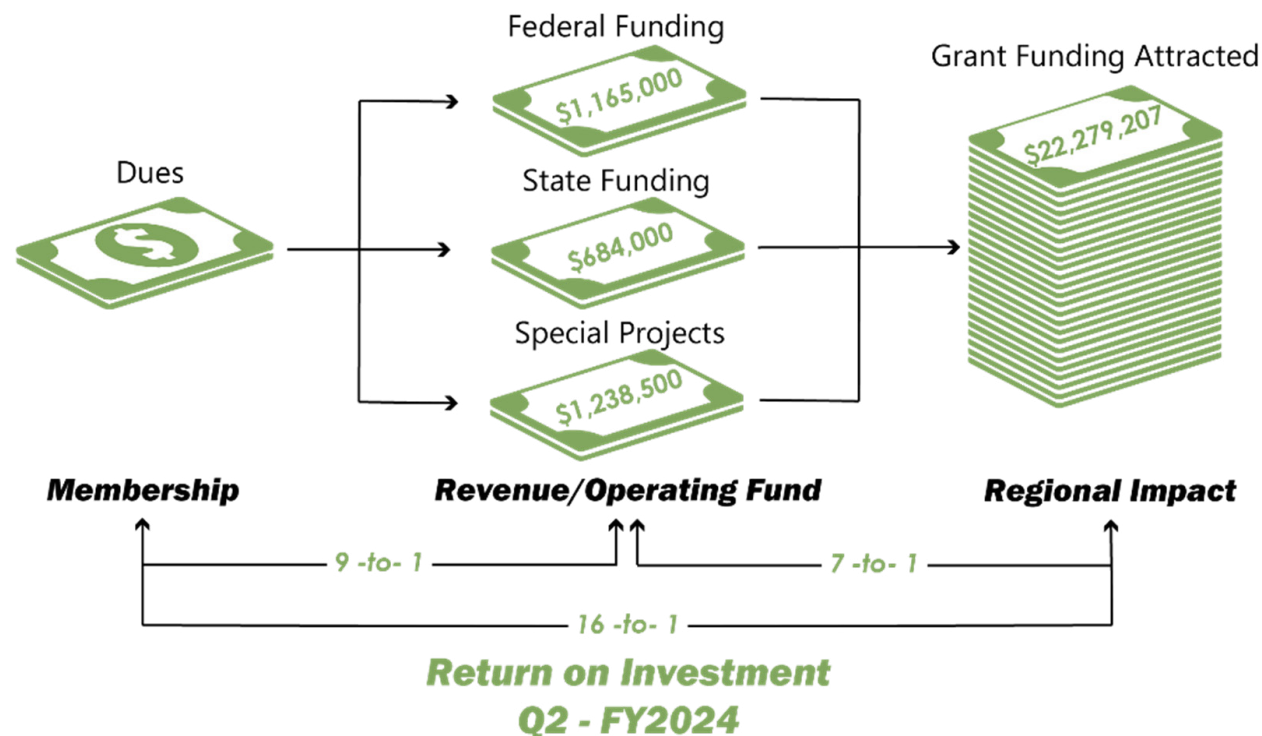
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

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. At the end of each quarter and the fiscal year, each member government's return on investment is incorporated into a regional recap to help the COG showcase our value to the region.

At the beginning of the fiscal year, the COG planning team huddled up to identify and set the Regional Return on Investment Goal for the year. With numerous sources available and a large list of infrastructure and planning projects already assembled by our regional communities, the COG, based on current and anticipated work, set the FY24 Return on Investment goal at \$100M. This goal represents a 25% increase from the previous year's goal of \$75M.

After two quarters, the COG has attracted \$22.3 million in grant funding for the region. Some highlights include:

- \$1M from DFA Economic Recovery Fund to McKinley County for RMCH Improvements
- \$2M from DFA Regional Recreation & Quality of Life Grant to the City of Gallup for Artificial Turf Replacement
- \$2M from DFA Regional Recreation & Quality of Life Grant to the City of Grants for the Multi-Purpose Arena
- \$1M from DFA Economic Recovery Fund to the Villag of Milan for the Milan Industrial Park





Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

