

**COUNTY OF TAOS
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**TAOS COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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PRESS RELEASE:

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Taos County to Invest \$1.4 million of American Rescue Plan Funds in Youth-to-Adult Career and Business Development Services

Taos, NM – Today, the Taos County Board of Commissioners formalized a number of contracted services with community partners to invest a portion of remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support the development of youth-to-adult career and business development services that will create economic recovery and resiliency, and career readiness for Taos County residents and businesses.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law by President Joseph R. Biden on March 11, 2021. It was designed to enable all Americans to respond to and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. By law, all entities that received Federal ARPA funding must obligate (contract or encumber) any remaining funds no later than December 31, 2024.

Taos County’s strategy is to create cohesive youth-to-adult workforce and business services that strengthen community partnerships and program connectivity. These investments include:

- A partnership with the Town of Taos and Taos MainStreet to support operational planning and construction/renovation for the Business Resources & Innovation Center (BRIC) at 115 Civic Plaza Drive. The BRIC will serve as a one-stop business services center for start-ups, entrepreneurs and all Taos County businesses who are looking for business development support. The BRIC will house the SBDC, Taos MainStreet, Taos County Chamber of Commerce, a satellite office of the UNM-Taos HIVE, and hold office hours for Town and County Planning and Economic Development, and additional community and economic development partners.

- A partnership with the Town of Taos and Taos MainStreet to take the first action steps in realizing the Destination Stewardship Plan. These initial investments will focus on building a permanent network structure while identifying opportunities for long-term equitable development within the tourism industry per the recommendations of the plan.
- A partnership with Taos Center for the Arts (TCA) to support building renovations of 132 Paseo del Pueblo Norte to serve as a teen career center and culinary learning space that will act as a hub for classes, workshops, and work-based learning opportunities that connect youth to career pathways throughout the creative economy.
- A partnership with Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument to support work-based learning opportunities for local youth to gain job skills and career pathways in outdoor recreation, and to work with local outfitters to identify employment needs. The Friends group will work with the TCA to utilize 132 Paseo to cross-pollinate programming and educational opportunities.
- A partnership with the Taos Community Foundation to facilitate the partnerships with TCA and the Friends Group, and to offer an open grant application and pool for one-time investments towards workforce development and work-based learning programs throughout the County that can support economic recovery.

“Taos County is deeply proud to partner with the Town of Taos, and these incredible community organizations to make significant investments that will support systemic impact and opportunity for our local youth and businesses. Though the ARPA funds are a one-time investment, we believe these efforts will create a lasting effect by building capacity, infrastructure and a cohesive, collaborative approach that benefits our local residents, our youth, and spurs healthy economic growth,” said Jessica Stern, Taos County Economic Development Director.

ARPA funds will also be used to partner with Amigos Bravos to begin planning and design for a walking and nature path along Los Pandos Road that will connect pedestrians from Paseo del Pueblo to Witt Rd. This project is part of a larger effort to increase safety along Los Pandos Road, and leverage potential grant funding to address watershed health and vitality of the Rio Fernando de Taos.

Additional ARPA funds will be invested in affordable housing developments; and used to complete all improvements to Blueberry Hill Road.

“Taos County is committed to fostering a resilient and thriving community through strategic investments in our youth and local businesses. By leveraging the remaining ARPA funds, we are not only addressing immediate economic recovery needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term growth and sustainability. These partnerships with local organizations are

crucial in creating a cohesive network of support that will benefit our residents for years to come. We are excited to see the positive impact these initiatives will have on our community's economic and social fabric," said Brent Jaramillo, Taos County Manager.

About Taos MainStreet

Taos MainStreet is a nonprofit organization and accredited member of the Main Street America and New Mexico MainStreet networks. They believe that the Historic Taos Plaza District is for everyone. Their mission is to work with the community to revitalize the Historic Plaza District as a vibrant, civic space that is particularly welcoming and inviting for families, youth, and seniors aging in place. At the core of their approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and sustained, inclusive engagement.

About Taos Community Foundation

Taos Community Foundation (TCF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting local nonprofits, addressing community needs and promoting positive changes to nurture a strong and vibrant community in Taos, New Mexico, and throughout the surrounding areas. Through their various grantmaking programs, they invest in vitally important areas of our community, including basic needs, education, healthcare, arts and culture, environmental sustainability, and community advocacy. Taos Community Foundation serves as a trusted intermediary that bridges the gap between their generous donors and local nonprofit organizations that require resources and support. TCF is your community's trusted philanthropic partner, committed to nurturing philanthropy, fostering solidarity, and pursuing initiatives to improve the well-being of Taos and western Colfax Counties.

About Taos Center for the Arts

The Taos Center for the Arts (TCA) draws on its history as a dynamic leader for arts collaboration and partnership. Originally established by a group of working artists in 1953 and situated in the heart of Taos, the TCA serves and engages Northern New Mexico communities. With a 275-seat theater and two galleries, the TCA curates culturally relevant films, art exhibitions, and live performances as well as provides local, regional and internationally renowned artists, thinkers and performers the space to inspire creativity and foster a thriving love for the arts. Inter-Arts Internship Program engages youth and young adults in paid work-based learning opportunities. Experiences focus on digital literacy, technical production, professional development & administration.

About Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

Friends Of RGDN believes that land protection can't be fully realized without careful and meaningful land stewardship. They strive to facilitate a connection between the local community and the managing and governing agencies of our beloved National Monument. Through outreach, conservation, and access projects, They work to enhance the National Monument and the lives of the people who live, work and play in the Rio Grande del Norte. The Outdoor Academy is their program designed to engage local youth with our National

Monument while instilling stewardship of public lands. The program nurtures a sense of responsibility towards natural resources and offers enriching experiences through guided instruction, as well as showcases potential pathways to local employment opportunities.

About Amigos Bravos

Amigos Bravos is a statewide water conservation organization (based in Taos, NM) guided by social justice principles and dedicated to preserving and restoring the ecological and cultural integrity of New Mexico's water and the communities that depend on it. While rooted in science and the law, our work is inspired by the values and traditional knowledge of New Mexico's diverse Hispanic and Native American land-based populations, with whom we collaborate.

For additional information, please contact Jessica Stern, Economic Development Director at 575-737-6346 or jessica.stern@taoscountynm.gov

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