

# New Mexico Counties 2024 Legislative Priorities



Revenue Stabilization & Tax Policy Committee  
December 5, 2023

# Firefighter & EMS Recruitment & Retention

Appropriate funds to assist local governments with critical needs for career and volunteer firefighter and emergency services staffing, recruitment, and retention.

County Fire Districts	
Career Departments	Volunteer Departments
25	242

- Rural communities rely heavily on volunteer members
- SFMO data reflects a 17% decrease in volunteers since the pandemic
- In many counties, paid staff is limited to one or two individuals
- Call volume statewide has increased by as much as 50%
- Many response systems are overburdened
- Currently, 19 fire and emergency response districts are at risk of being shut down because they do not meet the response requirements necessary to serve their communities.
- These dramatic changes necessitate additional funding for recruitment and retention efforts for volunteers, as well as long-term solutions to help local governments add additional paid staff positions.

# Emergency Medical Services

New Mexico Counties requests an increased appropriation to the Department of Health Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Bureau to assist local governments with EMS services.

Emergency medical services in New Mexico have been significantly underfunded for years and although local governments have assumed responsibility for providing these services, they are not statutorily required to do so.



Current state appropriations have dropped to \$2.8 million, less than what was allocated in the mid-1990s.

Taxes collected through local GRT increments, and other sources of revenue do not provide sufficient support to local governments to meet community needs, especially in rural areas of the state where county services are often the only response available. A more sustainable shared revenue should be identified.

# Reach, Intervene, Support & Engage (RISE) Program

New Mexico Counties requests that the Legislature continue and increase funding for the Reach, Intervene, Support and Engage (RISE) Program in the Human Services Department Behavioral Health Services Division budget.

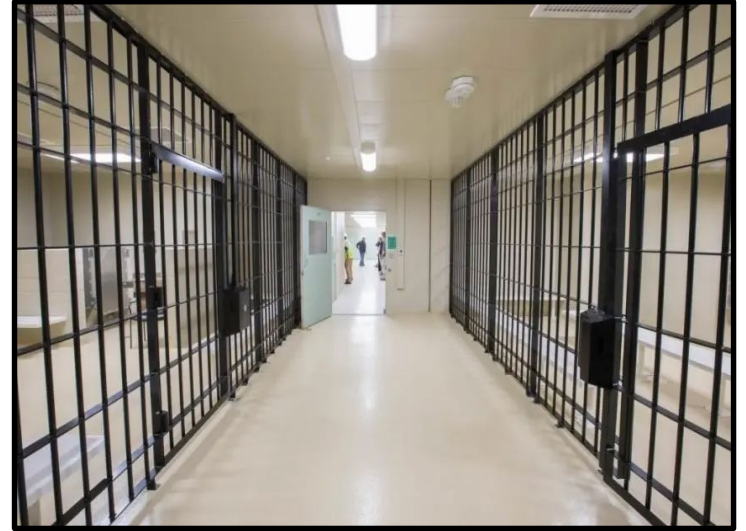
RISE is a partnership between the state and selected counties to provide behavioral health, MAT, housing, vocational and other services to people in detention.

RISE is being implemented in Bernalillo (through UNM), Colfax (through Krossroads Integrative Health and Recovery Solutions), Doña Ana, Eddy (through Lifehouse Inc.), Grant, Lincoln, Luna, Roosevelt, San Juan, Sierra, Socorro, and Valencia counties.

San Miguel and Curry counties were awarded planning grants for RISE programming. An increase in funding would provide sustainability and enable expansion of this very successful program.

# Detention Reimbursement Fund

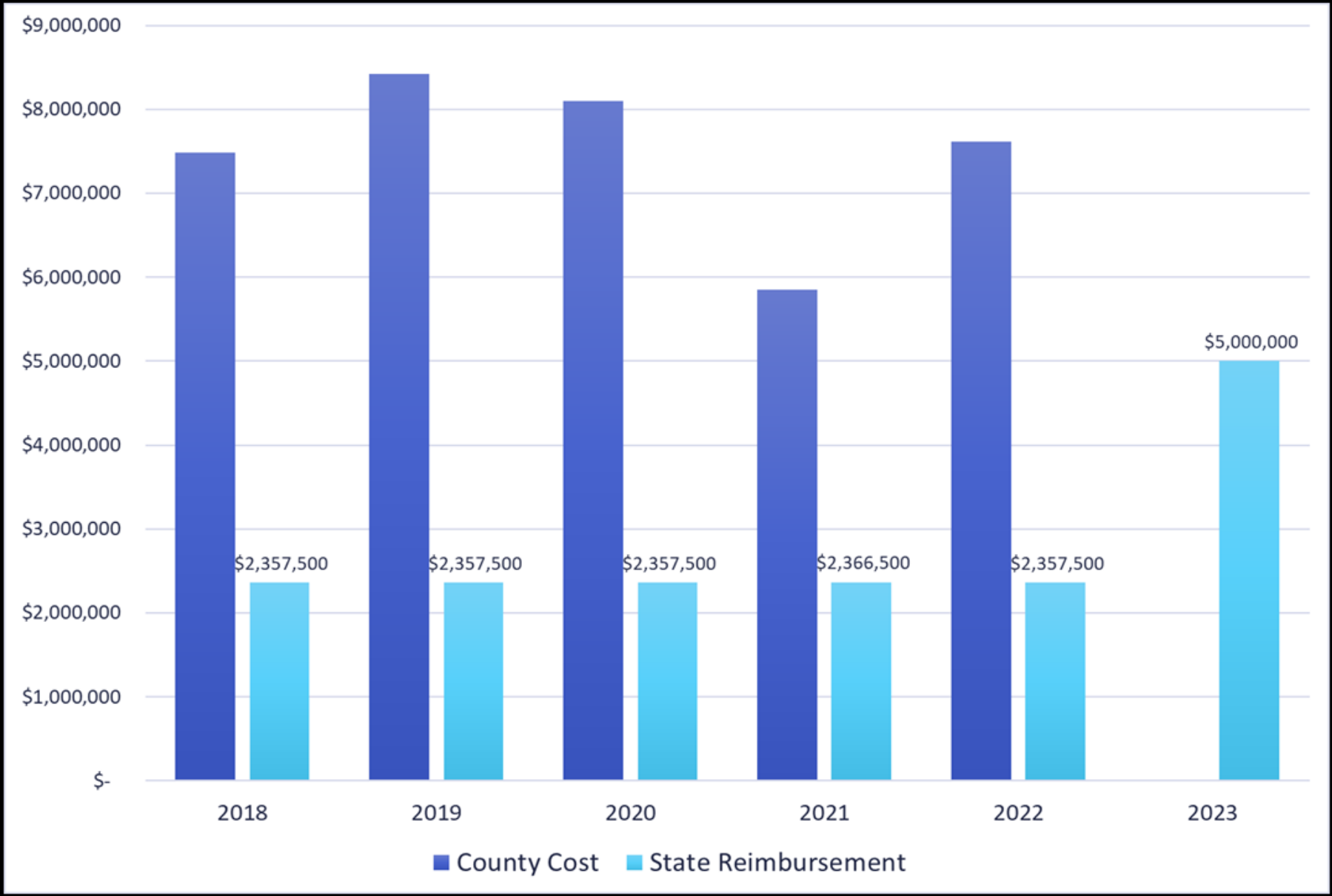
New Mexico Counties requests an appropriation of \$7.5 million for the County Detention Facility Reimbursement Fund, (NMSA 1978 §33-3B-4), to reimburse counties a percentage of the cost for housing felony offenders who have been sentenced to confinement in state correctional facilities, but are held in county facilities.



The County Detention Reimbursement Fund was created in 2007 with a \$5 million appropriation following litigation between the counties and state. It diminished to less than \$2.5 million over the next decade.

The Legislature restored it to the 2007 amount of \$5 million in 2022, but the five-year average cost to house New Mexico Corrections Department inmates has been calculated by the New Mexico Sentencing Commission to be \$7.5 million.

# Detention Costs vs. Reimbursement



# Prisoner Transport & Extradition

New Mexico Counties requests an appropriation of \$750,000 to the Department of Finance & Administration to fund state prisoner transport and extradition, as provided by NMSA 1978 § 4-44-18C, for individuals committed by a court to a state institution.

Currently, counties provide this service, but the Legislature has not appropriated the funding to provide reimbursement as required by state law.



# Detention Recruitment & Retention

New Mexico Counties requests an appropriation of \$10 million for the Detention and Corrections Workforce Capacity Building Fund established by the legislature in 2023 (NMSA 1978 §9-6-19).

The Fund was created to assist counties with critical detention officer vacancy levels in county facilities notwithstanding significant pay increases, to attract and retain employees.

County Facility	# of Current Staff	# Staff Vacancy	% Staff Vacancy
Doña Ana	217	44	20.28%
Roosevelt	31	7	22.58%
Colfax	30	7	23.33%
Sandoval	55	14	25.45%
Curry	64	17	26.56%
Chaves	85	27	31.76%
San Juan	95	31	32.63%
Otero	52	17	32.69%
Eddy	115	41	35.65%
Valencia	45	17	37.78%
Taos	27	11	40.74%
Bernalillo	411	170	41.36%
Bernalillo (Juvenile)	97	45	46.39%
Quay	22	12	54.55%
McKinley	30	17	56.67%



## Detention Officer Starting Pay

County	Officer Pay	Officer Pay	Officer Pay	County	Officer Pay	Officer Pay	Officer Pay
	2021	2022	2023		2021	2022	2023
Bernalillo	\$17.75	\$19.22	\$20.34	McKinley	\$17.98	\$14.50	\$16.92
Chaves	\$13.29	\$15.35	\$17.00	Otero	\$12.00	\$19.53	\$19.53
Colfax	\$14.10	\$16.98	\$16.98	Quay		\$14.00	\$15.00
Curry	\$15.19	\$16.00	\$16.32	Rio Arriba	\$14.15	\$18.00	\$21.75
De Baca		\$15.00	\$15.00	Roosevelt	\$13.23	\$14.71	\$15.19
Dona Ana	\$13.70	\$17.50	\$18.00	San Juan	\$16.98	\$18.48	\$18.66
Eddy	\$19.51	\$22.61	\$23.75	San Miguel	\$10.05	\$13.40	\$16.46
Grant	\$12.78	\$15.97	\$16.00	Sandoval	\$14.40	\$17.50	\$17.73
Hidalgo	\$13.75	\$13.75	\$15.50	Santa Fe	\$16.05	\$21.34	\$26.00
Lea	\$15.00	\$26.00	\$27.30	Sierra	\$12.90	\$15.41	\$15.41
Los Alamos		\$22.26	\$22.26	Socorro	\$13.10	\$13.44	\$16.11
Luna	\$13.40	\$15.00	\$16.00	Taos	\$14.23	\$16.43	\$19.83
Lincoln	\$13.80	\$18.63	\$20.00	Valencia	\$13.60	\$17.00	\$17.00
\$21.34 after academy				\$500 incentive after first 6 months & \$500 after 1 year			
\$750 sign on bonus after 6 months				\$21.65 after academy; \$3,000 sign on bonus until 12/31/23			

# Courthouse Funding

New Mexico Counties requests a recurring appropriation of \$20 million for construction, renovation, and other needs of state district courthouses.

In 2023, the Legislature appropriated \$23 million to the Administrative Office of the Courts to assist with these critical needs.

\$15 million was designated to resolve litigation between the 8th Judicial District Court and Otero County and the remaining balance is being distributed based on needs statewide.



# Courthouse Funding

State district courts no longer reflect a single judge residing at a county facility the way the territorial statute first intended.

State district courthouse construction can reach well over \$50 million, and the addition of a single judge can cost a county \$2-\$3 million for renovation and increased operational support.

Counties maintain that district courthouses are a state responsibility and that the rising costs of construction, security, and IT necessitate a shared revenue stream.



# State Health Benefits Plan

Immediately following the 2023 Legislative Session, the General Services Division invoiced local government public bodies (LPB) for prior and anticipated budget shortfalls in the Employee Health Benefits Fund.

- The State of New Mexico had not increased premiums over the past three years and had not followed through on recommendations to audit provider payments.
- Participating local governments were not adequately notified of the significant shortfalls and the 24 member counties question the legality of these “special assessments.”
- NMC seeks a solution to ensure fund solvency and guarantee proper notice and planning to enable LPBs to adequately budget for increased costs moving forward.

# State Health Benefits Plan

New Mexico Counties seeks a long-term and sustainable solution for the estimated \$149 million deficit in the New Mexico Employee Health Benefits Fund.



We ask that the Legislature make an appropriation to rectify the current deficit and develop a plan to thoughtfully address future shortfalls.

Participating counties recognize and anticipate that for the fund to be solvent, premium increases may need to be appropriately budgeted for and implemented over the next several years.

# Elected Official Salary Caps

County elected officials' salaries are capped by New Mexico law. NMSA 1978 §4-44-4. HB410 passed unanimously during the 2023 legislative session but was vetoed.

An increase is imperative this year as it would affect any incoming elected officials who take office in January 2025. Counties have historically received an increase to the salary cap every four years.

The cap was last amended in 2018 and in several counties, the chief deputy official or undersheriff make significantly more than the elected official.

New Mexico Counties requests that the Legislature increase the salary cap for newly elected officials by 15% with a provision for future adjustments to track the Consumer Price Index.

Bernalillo  
Chaves  
Cibola  
Dona Ana  
Guadalupe Lea  
Luna  
McKinley  
Rio Arriba  
San Juan  
San Miguel  
Sandoval  
Santa Fe  
Valencia

# Additional Items for Consideration

# Adjudication Fines & Fees Backfill

HB 139 (2023 Rep Cadena) eliminates state-mandated post-adjudication fees assessed in criminal and traffic cases effective July 1, 2024.

The Local Government Corrections Fund (NMSA 1978 §33-3-25) previously received revenue from fees eliminated under HB139.

The corrections fund statute was amended and the version that will become effective as of July 1, 2024 changes the sources of money for the fund and also where the money goes (used to be AOC and will now be the local government division of DFA).

The administrative office of the courts calculates the average amount collected by this fund to be \$1.3 million.

New Mexico Counties is requesting that the legislature provide an appropriation from the general fund to fill in the shortfall created by fee elimination.



# Taxation & Revenue Administrative Fees

New Mexico Counties supports amending the “fee” on local governments charged by the Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD).

TRD retains a 3% administrative fee to cover the “reasonably necessary” cost for collecting and distributing local gross receipt taxes.

Counties alone paid \$26,982,432.89 million in administrative fees in Fiscal Year 2023.

Combined local governments pay over \$50 million annually even though the current fee structure is not based on any actual assessed costs.

It is extremely unlikely that administration of local government taxes accounts for such a significant of TRD’s general fund expenditures.

This amount should be reevaluated to more appropriately reflect the actual costs for providing the service.



# County GRT Distribution Comparison for 2022 and 2023

	2021-2022	2022-2023
Bernalillo County	\$ 284,664,896.77	\$ 287,400,049.38
Catron County	\$ 1,509,329.72	\$ 734,632.89
Chaves County	\$ 17,803,082.69	\$ 17,299,225.41
Cibola County	\$ 7,336,089.98	\$ 6,495,522.14
Colfax County	\$ 2,755,621.85	\$ 2,688,701.14
Curry County	\$ 11,467,386.27	\$ 10,857,252.31
De Baca County	\$ 345,173.81	\$ 253,080.70
Doña Ana County	\$ 74,591,658.15	\$ 65,182,558.38
Eddy County	\$ 62,426,105.35	\$ 87,602,097.06
Grant County	\$ 8,652,909.61	\$ 9,112,838.37
Guadalupe	\$ 1,771,252.66	\$ 1,580,909.15
Harding County	\$ 186,484.19	\$ 295,910.92
Hidalgo County	\$ 1,181,631.59	\$ 1,084,900.80
Lea County	\$ 30,575,822.51	\$ 44,220,093.05
Lincoln County	\$ 2,498,851.63	\$ 2,474,361.21
Los Alamos County	\$ 65,392,036.62	\$ 82,062,045.76
Luna County	\$ 7,393,107.20	\$ 8,616,263.94

	2021-2022	2022-2023
McKinley County	\$ 19,721,904.62	\$ 19,880,017.53
Mora County	\$ 1,217,457.94	\$ 1,871,609.20
Otero County	\$ 18,568,417.18	\$ 12,492,551.38
Quay County	\$ 3,410,210.80	\$ 3,554,346.49
Rio Arriba County	\$ 9,615,817.97	\$ 10,618,350.34
Roosevelt County	\$ 5,447,559.86	\$ 5,508,168.43
San Juan County	\$ 48,647,896.34	\$ 51,092,245.04
San Miguel County	\$ 5,734,253.15	\$ 7,539,088.10
Sandoval County	\$ 22,768,815.14	\$ 26,030,436.72
Santa Fe County	\$ 90,202,621.13	\$ 94,204,333.55
Sierra County	\$ 3,604,213.93	\$ 4,268,893.30
Socorro County	\$ 2,975,404.98	\$ 2,621,527.55
Taos County	\$ 16,346,221.44	\$ 18,225,586.77
Torrance County	\$ 5,539,326.97	\$ 4,613,725.19
Union County	\$ 1,142,336.06	\$ 1,025,179.74
Valencia County	\$ 25,736,884.01	\$ 25,114,735.55

# County Property Tax Revenue Comparison for 2022 and 2023

County	FY22	FY23
Bernalillo County	\$137,454,606.67	\$145,099,637.07
Catron County	\$1,390,480.87	\$2,595,098.13
Chaves County	\$9,743,006.66	\$10,596,430.71
Cibola County	\$3,565,642.71	\$3,674,467.99
Colfax County	\$6,161,917.91	\$6,433,556.50
Curry County	\$9,123,534.51	\$10,582,448.09
De Baca County	\$865,420.52	\$915,747.48
Dona Ana County	\$47,001,551.46	\$49,603,540.92
Eddy County	\$23,837,496.56	\$31,227,035.99
Grant County	\$4,935,697.38	\$5,609,292.87
Guadalupe County	\$2,019,138.98	\$2,078,697.53
Harding County	\$575,755.09	\$610,462.92
Hidalgo County	\$2,027,844.86	\$1,896,786.63
Lea County	\$27,571,799.01	\$31,150,506.55
Lincoln County	\$12,649,442.94	\$13,251,027.75
Los Alamos County	\$8,262,389.98	\$8,360,253.00
Luna County	\$6,701,527.48	\$6,711,434.24

County	FY22	FY23
McKinley County	\$7,218,192.20	\$7,207,561.45
Mora County	\$1,204,508.85	\$1,351,421.72
Otero County	\$10,512,886.37	\$11,248,322.48
Quay County	\$2,403,525.50	\$2,436,767.54
Rio Arriba County	\$5,797,089.57	\$6,216,416.00
Roosevelt County	\$7,021,613.46	\$7,137,672.73
Sandoval County	\$28,267,353.67	\$30,670,011.49
San Juan County	\$22,735,661.70	\$22,979,967.03
San Miguel County	\$3,670,338.11	\$1,309,732.00
Santa Fe County	\$52,375,404.00	\$57,127,928.00
Sierra County	\$3,455,638.56	\$3,743,551.75
Socorro County	\$2,894,711.96	\$3,157,551.48
Taos County	\$11,572,831.58	\$12,278,298.66
Torrance County	\$4,655,399.81	\$5,585,431.01
Union County	\$1,382,625.79	\$1,403,567.39
Valencia County	\$12,997,746.87	\$14,068,071.93
<b>County Totals</b>	<b>\$482,052,781.59</b>	<b>\$518,318,697.03</b>

# Thank You

**Katherine Crociata**

Government Relations

505-350-9357

[kcrociata@outlook.com](mailto:kcrociata@outlook.com)

**Joy Esparsen**

Executive Director

505-660-9629

[jesparsen@nmcounties.org](mailto:jesparsen@nmcounties.org)

**Grace Philips**

General Counsel

505-690-6319

[gphilips@nmcounties.org](mailto:gphilips@nmcounties.org)



**NEW MEXICO  
COUNTIES**

33 STRONG