New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee Policy Spotlight

Regional Recreation Centers and Quality of Life Grants



May 15, 2024



Legislative Finance Committee

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Summary

Regional recreation centers, parks, fairgrounds, rodeo grounds and other similar facilities enhance the quality of life of communities and have health and economic benefits. Recent federal and state outdoor recreation initiatives have provided some funding for increasing public recreational assets. However, many under-resourced and rural communities in New Mexico still lack adequate recreational facilities and other amenities for residents and visitors. Capital funding for these projects is often not prioritized because of other critical public safety and other basic needs. To address this funding gap, the Legislature in 2022 and 2023 appropriated \$85 million to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) for regional recreation centers/quality of life (RRC/QOL) grants. From those appropriations, DFA made 98 awards to municipalities, counties, and tribal entities ranging from \$36 thousand to \$7.2 million. Awards covered 72 percent of the requested amount for funded projects, supporting \$276 million in total project costs.

The RRC/QOL grant program is barely 18 months old. In that time, DFA was able to set up a grant program for the funding that incorporated best practices for infrastructure funding, even with minimal legislative direction. As a result, although many projects are still in early stages, others are on track for completion by the appropriation reversion deadlines at the end of FY25. This is generally a better outcome than many similar local capital outlay projects. Of note, DFA ensured projects were vetted and made funding decisions based on standardized criteria.

Future administration of RRC/QOL grant funding could be further strengthened to ensure state funding results in useful community infrastructure. For example, a more rigorous screening and award process could require a site visit and a tiered award system so that large projects are assessed for feasibility based on best practices, such as phased funding, cost sharing, and capacity to execute the project. Further, capacity levels in some communities still present significant challenges to project completion, and DFA will likely need to ensure that communities have access to appropriate technical assistance.

Key Recommendations

Because of the relative success of funding RRC/QOL projects through these new appropriations rather than through the typical capital outlay process, this report recommends that the Legislature:

- Consider establishing a fund to continue the grant program and direct local capital outlay requests for recreational and quality of life projects to that fund;
- Allow a percentage of funds for pre-award technical assistance;
- Encourage standardized policies, scoring criteria, funding prerequisites, and grant administration requirements across programs and agencies when possible.

It also recommends that DFA:

- Incorporate additional best practices in vetting and awarding future RRC/QOL funds, e.g., require cost sharing and fully funded projects or phases;
- Implement a more robust, tiered screening and award system particularly for projects over \$1 million to ensure projects are feasible;
- Coordinate with other state agencies to leverage state funding for these types of projects.



Background

Nationwide and in New Mexico, local recreation and quality of life providers face significant funding pressures. According to a 2018 study commissioned by the National Recreation and Parks Association on the role of parks and recreation in economic development, park and recreation budgets took a big hit during the Great Recession and have not fully recovered to their pre-recession levels. The pandemic increased the use of outdoor facilities and surveys and town halls commissioned by the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) in 2021 confirm the increase in outdoor recreational activities and a desire for additional facilities statewide.

Many local governments serve very small populations and have limited resources to build and operate recreational infrastructure.

According to a 2021 survey conducted for EMNRD's most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), many local governments that operate recreational facilities served populations smaller than 10 thousand residents with an average annual capital budget of \$56,500 and an operating budget of \$76,206. The 38 respondent governments that contributed to the SCORP represented 21 of New Mexico's 33 counties. They cited funding as their single biggest challenge to providing local recreational and quality of life opportunities, followed by staffing shortages. The SCORP also surveyed residents statewide about their favorite recreational activities, access barriers, and their priorities for building new facilities. Although there was some regional variation in the order of favorite outdoor activities, residents generally gave the highest rating to hiking, walking, and running, followed by biking, camping, hunting, fishing, and recreational sports, such as pickleball. The survey was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic when many indoor facilities were closed, as were state parks, so the primary barrier cited was not being open to use. New facility needs included trails, courts, parks, and public restrooms.

	Average
Acres of developed parks and sports fields	219 acres
Acres of open space	402 acres
Miles of trails	8 miles
Capital budget	\$56,500
Operational budget	\$76,206

Table 1. Profile of NM Public Recreational Providers,2021

Note: The 38 respondents were primarily parks and recreation staff and local leaders (68 percent) who represented 21 of New Mexico's 33 counties in New Mexico and all six regions.

Source: SCORP

The Legislature recently appropriated new sources of dedicated state funding for recreation and quality of life capital projects.

New Mexico has historically funded recreational and quality of life facilities through nonrecurring channels, including local capital outlay and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) awards. The latter, combined with state matching funds administered by EMNRD since 1987, provided approximately \$48.5 million for 1,036 projects statewide between 1965 and 2004. These projects supported land acquisition for outdoor recreation, development or rehabilitation of parks, and trails. However, only 26 local projects have received funding in New Mexico since state match funding was discontinued in 1994, with the last local project funded in 2004. More recently, the state has invested in trails and outdoor education initiatives through Economic Development, Transportation, and Tourism department programming grants, but the only source for capital projects other than trails has been annual capital outlay



appropriations. From 2019 to 2023, the Legislature appropriated roughly \$186 million to more than 500 local park and recreation projects through the annual capital outlay bills.

New Mexico's land and water conservation fund program is being revitalized with recurring federal funding and new support from the Legislature. The National Park Service currently allocates approximately \$3 million per year to New Mexico in formula grants from the federal land and water conservation fund (LWCF). LWCF awards are capped at \$500 thousand, require a dollar-for-dollar local match, and have stringent regulatory and permitting requirements. Another \$15 million is available through the outdoor recreation legacy partnership, a set-aside in the federal program for larger communities for equity projects. After a period of not funding local projects because of uncertain federal funding, EMNRD is rebuilding its internal capacity to administer the local program, with new staff and funding to provide technical assistance to applicants. The Legislature in 2024 amended the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Act of 1973, the enabling act for the state supplemental land and water conservation fund (16-1-3 NMSA 1978). The amendments expanded eligibility by raising the population threshold, prioritizing funding requests from tribes and pueblos, and allowing LWCF to grant up to 50 percent of the required local match. The amended act now allows EMNRD to use a percentage of the funds to provide technical assistance to applicants.



Chart 1. Historic LWCF Local Project Awards and State Match Funding

Note: New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Act of 1973 created the "state supplemental land and water conservation fund". The Legislature appropriated \$250 thousand for seed money to be used in FY 1973-1975. Unused money would revert to the general fund. From 1975 to 1984, the Legislature appropriated a total of \$1.9 million to the supplemental fund, with the majority of that amount in the 1970s and 1980s. The last appropriation was in 1994. There were \$2.9 million in six awards for state park projects from 2021 to the present.

Source: LFC files

The Legislature in 2024 also created the New Mexico match fund, with the goal of leveraging billions of federal dollars in coming years. With an initial cash infusion of \$75 million, the fund will be available to state, tribal, and local entities that require matching funds to be eligible for a federal grant. The fund can also provide an additional grant award to cover the costs of administering recreation or quality of life projects.

The Legislature dedicated \$85 million for regional recreation centers/quality of life (RRC/QOL) initiatives in recent years.

The Legislature appropriated \$45 million in 2022 and \$40 million in 2023 to DFA for regional recreation centers and quality of life grants statewide. All but \$5 million of the total funding was derived from the \$1.067 billion in fiscal recovery funds to the state from the federal American Rescue Plan Act. DFA awarded the full amount each year, funding 41 projects in 2022 and 57 projects in 2023 (see Appendix A for all



awards). The grants are intended to improve the quality of life for New Mexico residents by creating new or expanding existing regional recreational facilities. DFA determined that the award funds could be used for project planning and design, purchase of recreational equipment, and project construction, including community centers, skateparks, splash pads, rodeo grounds, outdoor theatres, picnic shelters, or other structures that enhance public-based recreational activities.



DFA set up the RRC/QOL program quickly, and projects following best practices are on track for completion.

The Legislature appropriated funds for RRC/QOL grants in FY23 and FY24 with all funds to awardees reverting by June 30, 2025 due to a provision in in the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that required that funds allotted to states in 2022 be fully obligated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026. The Department of Finance and Administration's Local Government Division (LGD) set up the RRC/QOL program quickly, sending out the first award letters within six months of FY23 funds becoming available. LGD made awards based on a set of screening criteria and generally adhered to best practices for capital grants but notably did not require cost-sharing and was not always able to ensure the project or phase could be fully funded, which has implications for anticipated project outcomes. The program is only 18 months old but there have been some early successes with projects completed or near completion. Based on project data from DFA and LFC fieldwork,¹ six case studies describe the factors that successful projects share and some potential barriers that make project outcomes uncertain for other projects. The case studies suggest best practices to improve both the way projects are vetted and awards made by DFA and how they are implemented by awardees. The progress of these six projects is reported in a common format in the appendices of this report.

DFA generally followed best practices for capital outlay in administering the RRC/QOL grant program.

Owing to federal ARPA deadlines, DFA's implementation window for the RRC/QOL program is three years. First-round grant recipients have two and half years to complete their projects, second-round recipients only one and a half years.² DFA rated projects based on their potential impact on recreational access and economic development, as well as local capacity to execute the project (see Appendix B for the scoring rubric). RRC/QOL awards were broadly categorized as plan/design, equipment, and construction, with combinations allowed, and assigned to three tiers of funding levels.

DFA established three categories of RRC/QOL awards:

- Plan/Design: preliminary engineering report (PER), planning, and design
- Equipment: indoor or outdoor equipment, including playground equipment
- Construction: for small and large projects, including community centers, skateparks, splash pads, rodeo grounds, outdoor theatres, picnic shelters, or structures that enhance public recreational activities

And three tiers for funding levels:

- Tier 1: small projects of \$10 thousand to \$99 thousand plan, design, furnish, purchase equipment
- Tier 2: medium projects of \$100 thousand to \$499,999 plan, design, furnish, construct, purchase equipment
- Tier 3: larger projects of \$500 thousand to more than \$1 million plan, design, furnish, equip, construct

Source: DFA

¹ LFC's research for this report found that many projects are still in the early phases of execution but are moving forward. LFC evaluation and capital outlay staff conducted fieldwork to better understand the intended outcomes and to gain insight from grantees on barriers to project completion, factors supporting project success, and the value and challenges of the new grant program. The fieldwork consisted of interviews and site visits with a representative group of grantees, as well as interviews with technical assistance providers, and architectural and engineering contractors. ² Originally, 2023 grantees had only one year to implement but the Legislature changed the reversion date to June 30, 2024.





Chart 2. Regional Recreation/Quality of Life Grants by Size

DFA made larger awards in 2022 for the first round of funding, with seven project awards greater than \$3 million. For 2023, DFA implemented a tiered system and capped a single award amount at \$2 million. Award amounts for the 98 funded projects across both years ranged from \$36 thousand to \$7.2 million.

Figure 1. New playground at Sandoval County Fairgrounds

DFA was able to fully fund small projects like playgrounds. Examples include awards for playgrounds in the towns of Grady in Curry County (\$189,640) and Milan in Cibola County (\$200 thousand) and for the Sandoval County Fairgrounds in Cuba (\$230,610).

Source: LFC Files

DFA's screening criteria prioritized access for rural and underserved communities. In 2022, most RRC/QOL applications were for projects in rural communities (88 percent), largely municipalities (71 percent), with a smaller number of counties (24 percent), special districts, and tribal entities requesting grants (less than 1 percent each). DFA sought to distribute awards geographically over the two years of funding, with the 98 awards spanning 32 counties and three pueblos. Doña Ana and Lincoln counties received the most awards—seven totaling \$6.2 million and six totaling \$2.5 million, respectively (see Appendix A). However, McKinley and Cibola counties received the largest sums—for constructing multiuse event centers, at about \$7.5 million each. Santa Fe County is the only county where no local entity scored high enough to receive a grant.



County/Pueblo	# Awards	Total Award 2022-2023	County/ Pueblo	# Awards	Total Award 2022-2023
Bernalillo	3	\$4,250,000	McKinley	3	\$7,500,000
Catron	2	\$400,000	Mora	3	\$2,944,676
Chaves	4	\$1,029,139	Otero	2	\$1,248,058
Cibola	3	\$7,474,244	Quay	4	\$7,425,214
Colfax	4	\$1,765,446	Rio Arriba	1	\$2,000,000
Curry	4	\$7,603,853	Roosevelt	4	\$2,880,175
De Baca	3	\$838,445	San Juan	4	\$4,808,793
Dona Ana	4	\$6,210,372	San Miguel	2	\$411,000
Eddy	4	\$6,645,217	Sandoval	3	\$1,351,380
Grant	3	\$812,100	Santa Fe	0	\$0
Guadalupe	1	\$211,720	Sierra	5	\$1,535,593
Harding	1	\$308,000	Socorro	4	\$1,382,157
Hidalgo	2	\$1,562,069	Taos	3	\$307,454
Isleta	1	\$36,000	Torrance	1	\$514,162
Lea	2	\$1,815,325	Union	3	\$3,311,936
Lincoln	6	\$2,518,865	Valencia	2	\$609,384
Los Alamos	1	\$150,000	Zia	1	\$1,373,062
Luna	1	\$1,157,600	Zuni	1	\$608,227
				Total	\$84,999,666

Table 2. Total Number and Award Amounts by County or Pueblo 2022-2023

Source: DFA

The volume of applications submitted in the first year of RCC/QOL grants speaks to the need for capital funds for recreational and quality of life projects. In 2022, DFA received 155 applications requesting \$246 million for projects with total costs of about \$343 million. Based on standard screening criteria, including rating according to a scoring rubric and a review of eligibility, DFA awarded \$45 million to only 41 projects (26 percent) for the first round of projects. There were fewer applications in 2023, largely due to the original one-year implementation requirement, which the Legislature later extended a year. There were a total of 74 applications, of which 57 (77 percent) were funded in the amount of \$40 million, 12 did not meet the screening criteria, four were not audit compliant, and one applicant withdrew.

Table 3. Summary of 2022 Applications

Non-Rural Submissions	18
Rural Submissions	137
Total Submissions	155
# County Projects Submitted	37
# Municipality Projects Submitted	110
#Special Dist. Projects Submitted	4
#Tribal Projects Submitted	4
On ICIP	132
Not on ICIP	14
Outdoor	111
Indoor	28
Not Eligible	16
	Source: DFA

RRC/QOL Eligible Expenditures:

- Plan/Design: preliminary engineering report, planning, and design
- Equipment: indoor or outdoor equipment, including playground equipment, etc.
- Construction: for small and large projects, including community centers, skateparks, splash pads, rodeo grounds, outdoor theaters, picnic shelters, or structures that enhance public recreational activities

Prohibited Expenditures:

Trail Systems

Source: DFA

RRC/QOL grants covered 72 percent of requested costs for funded projects. DFA was not able to fully fund projects requesting over \$1 million but covered approximately 72 percent of requested amounts for the projects that did receive awards in 2022 and 2023, providing partial support for \$276 million in total project costs. In contrast, projects receiving general fund appropriations in the 2024 capital outlay bill requested \$2.2 billion, of which \$931.6 million was funded, or 41 percent. Local projects are more likely than state-owned projects to receive partial funding through the capital outlay process due to intense



competition for limited funds. About 45 percent of roughly 1,400 general fund projects in 2024 received 50 percent or less of requested funds, with \$178.4 million appropriated to 642 projects for which \$1.5 billion was requested. The RRC/QOL award amounts were not sufficient to fully fund large construction projects, pointing to the difficulty in funding large local projects with state grants alone. Larger projects were also challenged by escalating construction costs. DFA made supplemental awards to at least three large projects in 2023 to mitigate cost increases.

Awards Funded 72 percent of Requested Costs (2022 and 2023 combined)

Total project costs:\$276 millionRRC/QOL requests:\$118.3 millionTotal awards:\$85 million

Source: LFC analysis

Completed RRC/QOL projects shared common characteristics that supported their success: shovel-readiness, cost sharing, and local capacity to manage and execute projects.

The following case studies illustrate shared traits that supported the success of some RRC/QOL projects: proactive local planning, investment in design with local dollars before securing state RRC/QOL grant funding, multiple funding sources, and professional staff with the capacity to execute funded projects. The city of Deming and Curry County both had significant projects they were able to complete fairly quickly. Both applicants had shovel-ready projects funded in the first round of awards in 2022.

Case Study 1: The shovel-ready nature of Deming's inflatable water park at Trees Lakes contributed to it being the first RRC/QOL project to be completed (see Appendix C for details). The city of Deming's efforts to prepare for construction before securing state funding contributed to the successful completion of the water park. The city incorporated the project into its infrastructure capital improvement plan (ICIP), ensured it aligned with its latest comprehensive plan, and completed an environmental assessment, business plan, and construction documents prior to seeking grant funding. On executing the grant agreement with DFA for \$1.2 million, the project started and was completed efficiently.



Figure 2. Deming's Inflatable Water Park was the First Completed RRC/QOL Project

The inflatable water park opened to the public in July 2023 and serves New Mexico residents from five surrounding counties, as well as out-of-state visitors. The water park, fully accessible to people with disabilities, is part of a larger recreation park that includes Trees Lake, an amphitheater, walking trails, and a playground.

Source: DFA and City of Deming



Case Study 2: Prior to receiving RRC/QOL grant funding, Curry County had already funded and completed planning and design for its event center. Now, the multipurpose livestock pavilion is on track for a grand opening at the county fair in summer 2024 (see Appendix C for details). Curry County's fairgrounds were more than 60 years old. The county funded the planning and design for the project and had a shovel-ready project waiting for a funding source for the construction. The two RRC/QOL grants totaling about \$6.9 million allowed the demolition of the old structures and the construction of the new enclosed event center and a playground. Curry County's multipurpose pavilion project was prioritized in two master plans, most recently in 2018, and had been on the county's ICIP for 10 years but was preempted by the detention center and other projects. By providing a dedicated funding source for recreational and quality of life projects, the Legislature alleviated the need for projects like this to compete with public safety and other priority needs for local capital funding. The renewed fairgrounds are key to the county and city's efforts to revitalize the southside of Clovis. Recreation facilities contribute to local and regional economic development but also have community development benefits. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, research demonstrates that parks and recreation facilities raise property values and have health and environmental benefits.



Figure 3. Curry County Event Center and Multipurpose Livestock Pavilion

Source:Formative Architecture

The 96,000 square foot enclosed facility is intended to accomodate rodeos, livestock auctions and sales, concerts, weddings, pageants, home and garden shows, and more. It could draw tourism from surrounding states and generate revenue for the county and the state.

Cost sharing and fully funding phases are best practices for capital outlay to ensure project completion.

Although DFA did not require cost sharing, successful RRC/QOL projects tended to contribute a local match and have other funding sources to the project. Requiring cost sharing is one way to ensure that projects are fully funded and to confirm that a project is a local priority that has been planned for in local budget processes. Cost sharing also makes it more likely there will be local commitment to investing time and resources to complete a project. RRC/QOL award amounts are comparable to costs for parks and recreation capital projects that EMNRD manages. For example, EMNRD's procurement request for architectural/engineering and landscape architecture states that contracts for these services generally range from \$250 thousand to \$2 million. However, this award level is inadequate to fully fund large construction involving buildings, such as multipurpose arenas and recreation centers that also have significant costs for infrastructure development, particularly in rural areas. The total costs for construction projects with RRC/QOL grants over \$2 million ranged from \$2.6 million for turf replacement in McKinley County to \$32.7 million for an events center in Clayton. Of particular concern are the long-term phased multipurpose



arena projects without any local sources of funding and no guaranteed revenue sources. DFA awarded 16 grants totaling about \$23 million to rodeo arenas and multipurpose event centers around the state. Additionally, without regional or statewide planning for such facilities, they may compete with one another and yield limited local economic benefits.

Capital Outlay Best Practices

- Fully fund projects or functional phases upfront,
- Require matching funding to be in place,
- Monitor projects centrally,
- Include specific expiration or reversion dates,
- Follow existing legislative guidelines.

Source: LFC and NM State Auditor

Of the 13 projects receiving a grant over \$2 million, five did not indicate any cost sharing in their applications, and only two had a local match. These large grant projects received around \$46 million, more than half the \$85 million awarded. Most of these projects had other committed federal funds or state capital outlay funds but no local funds, although some applicants used existing facilities as in-kind match. Based on LFC's analysis of their cash balances, some applicants could have contributed a local match but chose not to do so. For example, the village of Logan, which received almost \$5 million (100 percent funding) for a new recreation complex adjacent to Ute Lake State Park, had a cash balance of \$2.3 million (275 percent of expenditures) in the fourth quarter of FY23. Similarly, McKinley County received two awards totaling about \$5.5 million for improvements at its Red Rocks Park but had a cash balance of \$36.1 million (249 percent of expenditures) in the fourth quarter.

Case Study 3: The city of Grants followed best practices in planning and design, including appropriately phasing its project. However, it relies solely on state funding and does not have a funding source for future phases (see Appendix C for details). Grants is on track to complete the second part of phase one by fall 2024, consisting of replacing aging structures at the rodeo grounds with a new arena, a semi-enclosed building, and adjacent infrastructure (sewer, accessible parking, walkways, grandstands, electrical, sound system, site grading, partial roadway). The fully enclosed final arena will not be completed until phase seven. Two RRC/QOL awards totaling \$7.3 million will allow the city to complete phase one of the planned facility. Completion of the project will result in a versatile facility, compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, the arena is only one part of a larger site plan, and total costs are projected to reach \$30 million \$30 million for all phases. Because of the long-term phasing and overreliance on capital outlay appropriations from the Legislature, completion of the full project is likely to take many years, over which time construction costs will continue to increase.





The Grants multipurpose arena will host a variety of events, including rodeo competitions, BMX racing, motocross, speed paintball tournaments, concerts, mountain bike, and archery competitions, with the goal of increasing tourism and economic activity by providing a facility for a variety of events at the local, regional, and statewide levels.

Source: DFA

Some communities may be unable to execute RRC/QOL projects without additional technical assistance.

LFC's fieldwork for this report found that smaller local entities may lack the capacity to apply for and manage grants and complete the projects without additional technical assistance in project planning, design, and construction oversight. For some communities, not having budgeted sufficiently for planning, design, and permitting puts projects at risk of incompletion. The case studies for the village of Cuba and Mora County illustrate the limited capacity of small local entities to manage these large projects without additional assistance and funding.

Case Study 4: The village of Cuba did not adequately budget for planning and design and required additional assistance for its park expansion. Cuba's 2023 \$1.1 million RRC/QOL park project is on track for completion by fall 2024 (see Appendix C for details). The village originally planned to complete the project within one year, but that date was extended by DFA to June 30, 2025, for all 2023 awards to coincide with 2022 deadlines. The village is acting as a project manager with assistance from volunteers and a contractor due to a lack of staff and in-house capacity. The grant covers most of the cost of installing new park furnishings, equipment, and a modular concession and bathroom facility at the village's only park. Additionally, Sandoval County provided \$10 thousand for the modular building's foundation installation. Cuba also contributed in-kind site development work to cover utility connection costs. However, it did not adequately budget for planning and design, which meant it had to scramble to get additional technical assistance and funding to execute the project. The park is downhill from the Cuba Independent Schools campus and across the street from new teacher housing, presenting opportunities for the village and the district to collaborate on future recreation facilities.





Figure 5. Cuba's St. Francis of Assisi Park Expansion

The village will install new park furnishings, equipment, and a modular concession and bathroom facility. The village's goal is to increase the community's quality of life and have a positive impact on the economic viability of the village. The park facilities will also serve neighboring Jicarilla and Diné communities.

Source: DFA

The state provides various technical assistance resources for small and under-resourced communities. Although DFA did not provide pre-award, project management, or procurement assistance to RRC/QOL awardees, there are many sources of technical assistance available to local governments and tribal entities in New Mexico, including regional council of governments, the New Mexico Finance Authority, New Mexico State Parks Division, New Mexico MainStreet, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Economic Development Administration, among others. Federal agencies support nongovernment targeted technical assistance to rural and underserved communities to improve the likelihood of publicly funded projects being completed. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Partners Network uses "vulnerability assessment indices" to identify eligible counties and build community networks to provide targeted technical assistance. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Thriving Communities Program builds the capacity of disadvantaged communities to take "transformative projects from concepts to completion."

New Mexico MainStreet Pre-Construction Assistance Model

New Mexico MainStreet (NMMS) provides preconstruction technical to ensure that publicly funded projects are feasible and fully funded. NMMS revitalization specialists provide preconstruction technical assistance including review of construction documents and bid documents and provide design renderings for the projects. Funded projects must:

- Align with adopted/existing planning documents and include a stakeholder engagement plan.
- Build on existing assets.
- Leverage diverse funding sources so they are fully funded.

Source: NMMS

The Legislature also appropriated \$3.5 million in 2022-2023 for a new capacity building grant program. This program, while relatively new, has already been used to some success to leverage the impact of the RRC/QOL grants. Curry County was awarded a capacity building grant and used it to hire a grant writer and provided grant writing support for two RRC/QOL applicants for playgrounds in Melrose and Grady, in the amount of \$537,363 and \$376,850, respectively. The recipients also worked with Cooperative Educational Services for procurement.



A more rigorous application and award process would increase the likelihood of future project success.

A more rigorous, tiered process, particularly for large-scale real estate and construction projects, would mitigate the risks of projects not being completed on time or on budget and maximize the impact of public investments. Best practices to consider are two-phase funding (fund planning and design first, then construction); ensuring that planning and design budgets cover permitting, construction administration and management and similar costs; and having a higher level of pre-award screening, including site visits and document review. GSD's Facilities Management Division (FMD) and the Public Schools Facilities Authority (PSFA) provide exemplary practices for construction management and containing costs of large-scale construction projects. Projects from smaller local and county governments without in-house capacity to plan or execute projects should be provided with pre-award assistance, following best practices outlined in this report.

Funding design separately from construction is a best practice for large projects.

Given the high cost of construction in New Mexico at this time, funding planning, design, and construction all at once puts projects at risk of not being completed on time or on budget. The 2024 LFC *Policy Spotlight on Escalating Costs of Public Construction* found that a two-phase award is a better approach: funding planning and design first then construction based on actual cost estimates. This is the approach adopted by the Public School Capital Outlay Council (and its staff at PSFA) for public school construction funding. This approach provides more accurate cost estimates and ensures that projects are shovel-ready, or at least at the construction document stage before construction awards are made.

Approximately \$5.4 million in Regional Recreation Center/Quality of Life awards went to planning and design projects. DFA awarded the total amount requested for 15 planning/design projects totaling around 6 percent of the \$85 million appropriations. These awards ranged from 6 percent to 8 percent of total project costs for large construction projects. For new facilities, the total project cost and phasing may not have been reported by the applicants, so RRC/QOL design/planning awards which fund 100 percent of planning and design, could also have unknown project completion timelines. The city of Clayton notably received a planning and design award in 2022 in the amount of \$964 thousand and applied for construction funding in 2023 based on the plans, receiving the maximum of \$2 million for its \$9.8 million construction request. However, its estimated costs more than doubled from \$14.6 million to \$32.7 million.

Planning and Design Contracts Deliverables

A representative percentage cost breakdown for major deliverables of large design and planning contracts is:

- Schematic design
- Design development
- Construction documents
- Bidding and procurement Construction administration and oversight

25 percent 35 percent 5 percent 20-25 percent

15 percent

Source: LFC Fieldwork



Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Total Project Cost	Award Amount	% Funded by RRC/QOL
2022	Anthony	Dos Lagos Fishing Lakes & Amphitheater	\$498,697	\$498,697	100%
2022	Hurley	Big Muddy Recreational Area and Walking Paths	\$278,000	\$278,000	100%
2022	Las Vegas	City of Las Vegas Old City Hall Museum	\$320,000	\$320,000	100%
2022	Las Vegas	City of Las Vegas Padilla Sports Complex	\$99,000	\$91,000	92%
2022	Clayton	Town of Clayton Event Center	\$14,564,040	\$964,040	7%
2022	Zia Pueblo	Toshiya Community Wellness Center and Park Planning and Design	\$22,838,243	\$1,373,062	6%
2023	Chaves County	Chaves County Cultural Plaza	\$2,382,751	\$201,345	8%
2023	Roswell	City of Roswell Skate Park Complex	\$450,000	\$450,000	100%
2023	Santa Rosa	Santa Rosa Blue Hole Park Improvements	\$4,101,720	\$211,720	5%
2023	Isleta Pueblo	Pueblo of Isleta Splash Pad Planning & Design	\$36,000	\$36,000	100%
2023	Hobbs	New Multi-Generational Family Aquatics Center/Planning & Design	\$10,600,000	\$600,000	6%
2023	Los Alamos	Brewer Arena Accessibility & Improvement Project	\$2,500,000	\$150,000	6%
2023	Truth or Consequences	Louis Armijo Sports Complex Master Plan Development Project	\$48,188	\$48,188	100%
2023	Socorro County	Escondido Lake Park Project Phase 1 Design	\$123,302	\$123,302	100%
2023	Taos County	Filemon Sanchez Sports Complex Plan and Design	\$95,000	\$95,000	100%

Table 4. 2022 and 2023 RRC/QOI	_ Plan/Design Awards
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Total project costs unknown for 100% awards

Planning, design, and permitting for recreational and quality of life projects can take up to three years, potentially delaying implementation. According to the State Parks Division's design and development bureau staff, these activities are often not included in funding for outdoor recreation or similar quality of life projects but should be. In practice, projects that entail digging that might disturb cultural resources or touch national waterways or wetlands require review and likely permitting. Many smaller local and county governments may not be aware of these requirements and may not budget for them or consider them in their implementation timelines. Although DFA's recent RRC/QOL grants have fewer regulatory requirements, DFA may be wrongly assuming that local governments and tribes have the capacity for preproject planning.

Outdoor recreation and similar projects can be subject to significant regulatory and permitting requirements. The National Park Service requires completion of all requirements before notice of a Land and Water Conservation Fund award; thus, applicants assume all the costs and the risk for compliance with federal regulations, including:

the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Americans With Disabilities Act, P.L. 101-336, 1990; the Architectural Barriers Act, P.L. 90-480 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act P.L. 93-112, and must document handicapped access to proposed facilities.

And federal and state regulations, including:

National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, to other applicable federal regulations (36 CFR 61), to New Mexico's Prehistoric and Historic Sites Preservation Act of 1989 (Sections 18-8-1 through 18-8-8, NMSA 1978) and the 4.10.10 NMAC Certified Local Government Program.

Source: EMNRD



A higher level of pre-award review and screening is needed for large construction projects.

High-cost projects warrant additional vetting for feasibility. Unlike local capital outlay, which requires minimal vetting or documentation, DFA required applicants to provide some essential information for the RRC/QOL grants—such as operating and use agreements, project budgets, and cost estimates for equipment and property—but did not mandate the submission of detailed design and engineering documents, which should be required for large construction projects. For example, New Mexico MainStreet requires more vigorous vetting for projects they call "Great Blocks," which average \$1.9 million. This report considers \$1 million as a representative threshold because DFA defined large projects, its tier 3 awardees, as ranging from \$500 thousand to \$1 million and more. There were 27 RRC/QOL awards over \$1 million, totaling about \$60.4 million. Without comprehensive design plans and cost projections, neither the applicant nor the DFA can accurately assess the project's scope, dimensions, or anticipated expenses. DFA might consider reviewing compliance with these requirements in any future funding rounds. Further, as the Mora County case study below illustrates, without appropriate phasing for both funding and implementation, a large project can be subject to significant changes in scope and cost.

Case Study 5: Mora County's fitness center and plaza improvements project remains in the early design stage (see Appendix C for details). Mora County's project has experienced significant delays because of changes in scope and site. Site and engineering issues with the original site inside the county courthouse necessitated a change in location, requiring redesign and increased estimated costs associated with a stand-alone building, which are expected to significantly exceed the \$2.5 million RRC/QOL grant. Mora County's initial vision was to construct a recreational and community center within the unfinished section of its courthouse. However, design and engineering challenges associated with repurposing the complex for a conference center, tech incubator, and demonstration kitchen prompted a shift in the plan. The county decided to construct a separate building dedicated to a much-needed fitness center. Further changes include expanding the playground to be part of an expanded plaza. Project outcomes are unknown at this point, but the county envisions the recreational facility and plaza as an inclusive space for residents to maintain physical fitness while offering an outdoor community gathering space for picnics and celebrations.

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In Mora County's case, change in leadership and the multiple negative impacts of the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire make project outcomes uncertain.

Source: Albuquerque Journal



Large construction projects should include construction administration and oversight services in their budgets. Although critical to project success, smaller public entities may not budget for construction administration services. When the engineer or architect who created the design and construction drawings continue to provide oversight to the project during the construction phase, there is a higher likelihood that any unforeseen changes will be more efficiently managed and that the project will stay on budget and on schedule. GSD's Facilities Management Division (FMD) manages its contracts this way. These services may also be provided by qualified staff at larger public entities. Construction oversight and administrative services can account for as much as 25 percent of a planning and design contract. Although technically the services occur during the construction phase of a project, they often are included in planning and design contracts for design-bid-build projects. However, in the case of a construction manager at risk (CMAR) contract, the CMAR plays this role rather than the architecture or engineering firm.³

In its construction contracts, GSD's Facilities Management Division (FMD) tasks the architectural/engineering firm with construction management and with keeping the project on budget. FMD's projects generally stay on time and on budget during the construction phase and it helps make the workload of agency staff project managers manageable.

Case Study 6: Bernalillo County's Mesa del Sol sports complex is likely to be successful with its long-term phasing plan. The county's expansion project exemplifies best practices that made it a good candidate for RRC/QOL funding. Bernalillo County's Mesa del Sol sports complex is a large outdoor recreation project being built in phases, utilizing local, state, and federal funds. Aligning with the county's 2015 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Facilities Master Plan, the \$2 million recreation/quality of life grant awarded in 2023 will help complete phase three, comprising six grass playing fields that will complement the new artificial turf fields recently installed as part of phase two. Prior capital outlay funding of \$1.415 million (2020, 2022, and 2023), and \$2 million in federal ARPA funding contributed to the completion of phases one and two of this eight-phase project, with a total project cost of \$48 million. The county also has committed \$2.5 million in voter-approved general obligation bonds per bond cycle through 2030, and the recent 2024 legislative session resulted in an additional \$5 million in capital outlay funding for subsequent phases. Phase three construction is scheduled to start with site grading and infrastructure improvements in May 2024 and to be completed early 2025. This project also demonstrates that a good use of RRC/QOL grants is for the state to support more ambitious projects in larger communities by funding a phase.

³ Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) is a project delivery method in which the owner hires a construction manager (CM) to oversee the project from design to construction close-out and deliver it with a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) provided to the owner prior to the bid stage. New Mexico procurement code currently only allows CMAR contracts for educational institutions and home rule entities.





Figure 7. Mesa del Sol Regional Outdoor Sports Complex Conceptual Site Plan

Source: Bernalillo County

The Mesa Del Sol Sports Complex demonstrates access and economic development impacts. Located, south of the International Sunport, the complex will also serve nearby under-resourced communities; it is in an opportunity zone with a high social vulnerability score of 0.94 out of 1.

- Bernalillo County has a 40-year master lease with the State Land Office for 634 acres of state trust land at Mesa del Sol, including the recreational complex and the Isleta Amphitheatre.
- The county has a sublease with the City of Albuquerque and the New Mexico United soccer team for their practice and championship fields.
- SLO receives 19 percent of the full revenue received by the county for events at the Amphitheatre and the New Mexico United recreation complex.

The county anticipates thousands of overnight visitors annually, with potential \$5.6 million economic impact from sports events and \$3.4 million from hotel rooms, establishing it as a prime source of tourism and recreational revenue for central New Mexico.

Source: DFA and Bernalillo County

Recommendations:

For future grant rounds, DFA could revise its application and screening process as follows:

- Implement a tiered application process with distinct requirements for projects below and above the \$1 million threshold;
- Require that all construction projects budget appropriately for planning, design, and permitting, and contracts include construction administration and oversight services;
- For construction projects requesting over \$1 million in funding, mandate the submission of at least 60 percent completed design and engineering documentation, including detailed design plans, rough dimensions, and anticipated final construction costs;
- Require on-site visits for projects anticipated to cost \$1 million or more before awarding funding to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the project's scope and feasibility.



The Legislature and DFA should consider options to continue and improve RRC/QOL grants.

The RRC/QOL appropriations have funded worthy projects with at least moderate success in the initial two years of implementation, in part due to DFA's administration and in part due to readiness on the part of awardees. More could be done regarding pre-award screening and project vetting to ensure the funding is going to feasible projects. If the Legislature decides to continue funding, it should consider establishing a fund and encourage legislators to direct local recreational and quality of life local capital projects to that fund. The Legislature should also consider how to best work with DFA to further strengthen program administration to encourage project success. As noted in the 2021 LFC program evaluation *State-Funded Water Projects*, inconsistent vetting across a fragmented funding system creates risk for incomplete projects. The land and water conservation fund (LWCF) program administered by the State Parks Division (SPD) and New Mexico MainStreet's capital outlay program provides models for best practices for capital programs for local entities, particularly rural and underserved communities.

Going forward, DFA's new Infrastructure Planning and Development Division will need to coordinate with other state agencies and programs that fund local capital projects to best leverage other funding streams and ensure that new RRC/QOL projects are feasible, and that phases or entire projects are fully funded. Per the 2024 legislation establishing the Infrastructure Division, the division will provide local government infrastructure capital improvement planning, administer federal matching funds, assist rural communities through the rural equity ombud program, and perform other duties.

The state would benefit from a current inventory of recreational assets and ongoing assessment of their condition and project outcomes.

There is no comprehensive inventory of the state's RRC/QOL assets or of recreational providers, although EMNRD does have LWCF project data. No governmental entity keeps track of funding or conditions for these recreational assets, which may have multiple funding streams. EMNRD is required to conduct site reviews and assessments of 1,036 LWCF project sites every five years, but site assessments are not compiled electronically and are only reported to the National Park Service. The *2021 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP) report presents a preliminary design for a geospatial database of local assets, but the database was not implemented. EMNRD and DFA might consider whether this might be a good tool for supporting project awards and monitoring. Similarly, how many local governments have parks and recreation agencies or how many people they serve is unknown. The SCORP provides some insights in its reporting on surveys of users, local and county providers, and regional town hall results. That five-year plan expires in 2025 and is due to be updated.

DFA should require some outcome tracking for future RRC/QOL projects. The two primary goals for RRC/QOL projects are to increase access and economic development. With few exceptions, project narratives express aspirational goals without outlining any mechanism for demonstrating or tracking outcomes or planning for future improvements. DFA and other funders should consider tracking performance measures recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association that apply to all recreational and quality of life projects, such as:



- Physical activity Percentage of users engaged in sedentary, moderate, or vigorous physical activity at a specific facility.
- Visitation Annual number of visits to a specific facility.
- Frequency Average number of visits to a specific facility by an individual during a period of time.
- Duration Average time spent at a specific facility by an individual.

The American Heart Association and federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide additional measures for health related to recreation and physical activity.

Projects can leverage resources through shared use agreements and co-locating with other public facilities.

The RRC/QOL projects in the villages of Cuba and Milan are located next to public school facilities, which could present opportunities to collaborate rather than duplicate facilities. The village of Cuba's park is downhill from the Cuba Independent School District's campus and across the street from new teacher housing. Milan's park is across the street from the elementary school. However, fences prevent community use of the school facilities. The shared use of school recreational facilities with community members can provide safe and affordable places for communities to increase physical activity with the goal of increasing health outcomes and quality of life. CDC fitness guidelines recommend use of local school facilities after hours, but lack of staffing, appropriate design, and funding restrictions limit public access, as do safety concerns primarily in urban districts.

The Public School Facilities Authority's adequacy standards establish the minimum educational space and equipment needs for every public school in New Mexico but do not address community use. However, some considerations can be addressed in the design phase without increasing costs. For example, proper outdoor lighting facilitates community use of athletic fields and green spaces. In another example, the Public School Capital Outlay Committee (PSCOC) will not pay for building a larger gym to accommodate public use for events; however, including an entrance door to the gym from outside so that people don't have to go through the school enables community use.

Shared use of public school facilities is an important strategy to increase availability and reduce costs of activityrelated facilities in rural and underserved communities. New Mexico schools could apply for federal land and water conservation fund grants to turn school parks into community parks if shared use is included as a priority in EMNRD's next five-year state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan.

Source: American Heart Association

Los Alamos Public Schools partnered with Los Alamos County to include community recreation and meeting space in its recent replacement of two elementary schools. One successful example of a community leveraging public school capital funding to include community recreation needs is Los Alamos. In 2022, Los Alamos County provided \$7 million for the expansion of the gym at Piñon Elementary and a shared-use space at Chamisa Elementary for community use after school hours. The combined replacement cost of the two schools was about \$78 million. The two schools are currently under construction. The district expects a continued increase in school population and community growth due to expanded operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory and the hire of 1,800 new employees annually for the next five years. Around 300 new homes are planned for the White Rock community served by the schools.



Mississippi enacted a comprehensive state law in 2012 that incorporated American Heart Association policy recommendations regarding community recreational use of school property. The Mississippi law does the following:

- 1. Specifically authorizes a school district to adopt a policy for shared use,
- 2. Limits liability for injuries that occur during recreational use of school property during non-school hours,
- 3. Encourages school districts to enter into shared use agreements,
- 4. Authorizes local governments to expend funds to pursue shared use agreements,
- 5. Requires the department of education to create a shared use toolkit,
- 6. Requires the department of education to maintain a Web site to promote information sharing by the school districts,
- 7. Requires each school district to address community recreational use of school property.

Source: American Heart Association

Recommendations:

Going forward the Legislature and DFA should:

• Allow a percentage of funds for pre-award technical assistance to applicants that lack in-house capacity in grant and project management and do not have access to other state-funded resources.

DFA's Infrastructure Office should coordinate with other agencies, e.g., EMNRD, the Outdoor Recreation Office at the Economic Development Department, and the Public School Facilities Authority to:

- Standardize policies, scoring criteria, funding prerequisites, and grant administration requirements across programs and agencies when possible;
- Address priorities and needs identified in EMNRD's state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan for LWCF;
- Track progress by incorporating vetted benchmarks and outcome measures from National Recreation and Park Association (access and participation), the American Heart Association, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (health).

The Legislature could consider the following:

- Establish a fund and continue to appropriate monies for RRC/QOL grants beginning in FY26;
- Provide funding to EMNRD to create and maintain a statewide recreational assets database building on the prototype from the 2021 SCORP;
- Encourage PSOC/PSFA to incorporate shared use provisions in the public school adequacy standards and allow funding to accommodate community and after-hours use of recreational and fitness facilities, as well as incentivize local government matching funds for school-community spaces.



Appendix A. List of Funded Projects

	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
1	2023	Albuquerque	Westgate Community Center Addition	Construction	\$14,232,960	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	100%	7%	Yes	Yes	No
2	2022	Angel Fire	Village of Angel Fire Playground	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$500,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	100%	18%	Yes	No	No
3	2022	Anthony	Anthony Youth Farm Farmer's Market Complex	Construction	\$3,207,969	\$3,207,969	\$3,207,969	100%	100%	No	No	No
4	2022	Anthony	Dos Lagos Fishing Lakes & Amphitheater	Plan/Design	\$498,697	\$498,697	\$498,697	100%	100%	No	No	No
5	2022	Anthony	City of Anthony Soccer Field High Mast Sports Lighting	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$486,685	\$486,685	\$486,685	100%	100%	No	No	No
6	2023	Artesia	City of Artesia Aquatic Center Ninja Course	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	100%	100%	-	-	-
7	2023	Belen	City of Belen Skatepark	Construction	\$272,972	\$272,972	\$272,972	100%	100%	No	No	No
8	2023	Bernalillo County	Mesa Del Sol Regional Sports Complex Phase 3	Construction	\$6,223,756	\$3,393,756	\$2,000,000	59%	32%	Yes	Yes	No
9	2023	Bloomfield	Salmon Park Improvements	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$3,497,241	\$180,000	\$180,000	100%	5%	-	-	-
10	2022	Carlsbad	The Cavern Theatre Rehabilitation Project	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$3,324,166	\$3,324,166	\$3,324,166	100%	100%	No	No	No

2022 and 2023 Regional Recreation Centers/QOL Awards



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
11	2023	Carlsbad	Repair Riverwalk Recreation Center Facilities	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$3,009,282	\$1,621,051	\$1,621,051	100%	54%	Yes	No	No
12	2023	Carrizozo	Carrizozo Baseball Field	Furnish/Equip	\$225,625	\$225,625	\$225,625	100%	100%	No	No	No
13	2023	Catron County	Catron County Pie Town Community Center Improvements, Repairs, and Renovations	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	100%	100%	-	-	-
14	2023	Chaves County	Chaves County Cultural Plaza	Plan/Design	\$2,382,751	\$201,345	\$201,345	100%	8%	No	No	No
15	2023	Clayton	The Town of Clayton is developing an events center on the County Fairgrounds property, owned by the Town.	Construction	\$32,659,317	\$9,795,277	\$2,000,000	20%	6%	No	No	Yes
16	2022	Clayton	Town of Clayton Event Center	Plan/Design	\$14,564,040	\$964,040	\$964,040	100%	7%	-	-	-
17	2023	Cloudcroft	Michael Nivison Community Center Improvement Project	Construction	\$323,192	\$323,192	\$323,192	100%	100%	-	-	-
18	2023	Colfax County	Colfax County Event Center Upgrades	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,095,981	\$940,000	\$940,000	100%	86%	No	Yes	No
19	2023	Cuba	Cuba Naturally Beautiful Park Expansion	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$2,800,000	\$1,055,992	\$1,055,992	100%	38%	-	-	-
20	2022	Curry County	Curry County Event Center Multipurpose Livestock Pavilion	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$13,752,290	\$11,618,890	\$6,500,000	56%	47%	No	Yes	Yes
21	2023	Curry County	The Curry County Events Center (CCEC) is a 96,000-square- foot enclosed facility.	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$376,849	\$376,849	\$376,850	100%	100%	No	Yes	No



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
22	2022	De Baca County	De Baca County Fairgrounds Electrical and Water Systems Upgrades	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$290,261	\$290,261	\$290,261	100%	100%	-	-	-
23	2022	Deming	City of Deming Inflatable Water Park	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,457,600	\$1,157,600	\$1,157,600	100%	79%	Yes	No	No
24	2023	Des Moines	Des Moines gets an outdoor recreational area!	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$347,896	\$347,896	\$347,896	100%	100%	No	No	Yes
25	2023	Doña Ana County	Vado/Del Cerro Park Improvements: An Investment in Vado's Active Play and Fitness	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip	\$494,589	\$286,266	\$286,266	100%	58%	-	-	-
26	2023	Eddy County	Eddy County Shooting Range Bathroom Facility	Construction	\$1,427,062	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	100%	84%	No	No	Yes
27	2023	Elephant Butte	City of Elephant Butte Community Center Remodel	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$584,800	\$584,800	\$584,800	100%	100%	No	No	No
28	2023	Estancia	Town of Estancia Baseball Facility	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$514,162	\$514,162	\$514,162	100%	100%	No	No	No
29	2022	Farmington	All Abilities Park	Construction	\$13,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	100%	23%	-	-	-



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
30	2023	Farmington	Farmington Gateway Park Phase 1	Construction	\$4,500,000	\$1,177,069	\$1,177,069	100%	26%	No	No	Yes
31	2023	Fort Sumner	The Bosque Redondo Lake Park Project will be used to purchase and install a basketball court and volleyball court with bleachers, placement of new sidewalks, install lighting and electricity and construct a pavilion.	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$439,936	\$439,936	\$383,452	87%	87%	No	No	No
32	2022	Fort Sumner	Dallas Park Improvements	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$172,242	\$164,732	\$164,732	100%	96%	No	No	Yes
33	2023	Gallup	Joe Vargas Veteran's Memorial Park Artificial Turf Replacement	Construction	\$2,552,719	\$2,202,719	\$2,000,000	91%	78%	Yes	No	No
34	2023	Grady	Improvements for a park in Grady	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$189,640	\$189,640	\$189,640	100%	100%	No	No	No
35	2023	Grant County	Grant County Bataan Memorial Park Turf Replacement	Construction	\$480,000	\$480,000	\$480,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
36	2023	Grants	Grants Multi-Purpose Arena Phase 1B	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$10,017,972	\$4,297,881	\$2,000,000	47%	20%	Yes	No	No
37	2022	Grants	Grants Multi-Purpose Arena Phase 1b	Construction	\$5,274,244	\$5,274,244	\$5,274,244	100%	100%	No	No	No
38	2023	Hagerman	Angell Sports Complex Splash Pad	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$287,794	\$287,794	\$287,794	100%	100%	Yes	No	No
39	2022	Hagerman	Angel Recreation Area Expansion	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$99,998	\$99,998	\$90,000	90%	90%	No	No	No
40	2023	Hatch	Village of Hatch Community Center Splash Pad	Plan/Design; Construction	\$756,300	\$756,300	\$756,300	100%	100%	No	No	No



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Fund s	Local Fund s	Other Federal Funds
41	2023	Hobbs	New Multi-Generational Family Aquatics Center/Planning & Design	Plan/Design	\$10,600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	100%	6%	-	-	-
42	2022	Hurley	Big Muddy Recreational Area and Walking Paths	Plan/Design	\$278,000	\$278,000	\$278,000	100%	100%	-	-	-
43	2023	Hurley	Multi-Purpose Recreational Facility Improvements	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$10,017,972	\$4,297,881	\$54,100	1%	1%	Yes	No	No
44	2023	Isleta Pueblo	Pueblo of Isleta Splash Pad Planning & Design	Plan/Design	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
45	2022	Jal	Park Lake Basketball Court/Skate Park Improvement Project	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,215,325	\$1,215,325	\$1,215,325	100%	100%	No	No	No
46	2023	Kirtland	PICKLEBALL COURTS	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$451,724	\$451,724	\$451,724	100%	100%	-	-	-
47	2022	Las Vegas	City of Las Vegas Old City Hall Museum	Plan/Design	\$320,000	\$320,000	\$320,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
48	2022	Las Vegas	City of Las Vegas Padilla Sports Complex	Plan/Design	\$99,000	\$99,000	\$91,000	92%	92%	No	No	No
49	2023	Lincoln County	Lincoln County Rodeo Arena	Furnish/Equip	\$236,990	\$236,990	\$236,990	100%	100%	No	No	No
50	2022	Logan	Logan Recreation Complex	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$4,908,411	\$4,908,411	\$4,908,411	100%	100%	No	No	No
51	2023	Lordsburg	Short Park Softball Field	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,059,090	\$1,059,090	\$1,059,090	100%	100%	No	No	Yes
52	2022	Lordsburg	Short Park Improvements	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$522,979	\$502,979	\$502,979	100%	96%	Yes	No	No
53	2023	Los Alamos County	Brewer Arena Accessibility & Improvement Project	Plan/Design	\$2,500,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	100%	6%	No	No	Yes
54	2022	Los Lunas	Los Lunas Sports Complex Picnic Shelters	Plan/Design; Construction	\$336,412	\$336,412	\$336,412	100%	100%	-	-	-



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Fund s	Local Fund s	Other Federal Funds
55	2023	Los Ranchos de Albuquerque	Revitalization of Old Village Hall	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	100%	100%	-	-	-
56	2022	Maxwell	Maxwell Park Improvements	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$339,746	\$336,446	\$336,446	100%	99%	No	No	Yes
57	2022	McKinley County	Red Rock Park Improvements	Plan/Design; Construction	\$7,529,063	\$7,529,063	\$3,500,000	46%	46%	Yes	No	Yes
58	2023	McKinley County	Red Rock Park Bathrooms	Construction	\$9,505,584	\$4,005,584	\$2,000,000	50%	21%	Yes	No	No
59	2023	Melrose	Melrose Baxter Memorial Park Improvements	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$537,363	\$537,363	\$537,363	100%	100%	No	No	No
60	2023	Mesilla	Town of Mesilla Shade Shelter	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$97,087	\$97,087	\$97,087	100%	100%	No	No	No
61	2023	Milan	Park Playground Equipment	Construction	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
62	2022	Mora County	Mora County Recreation/Community Center	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$2,513,431	\$2,513,431	\$2,513,431	100%	100%	No	No	No
63	2022	Mosquero	Chris B. Cordova Memorial Veterans Park	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$308,000	\$308,000	\$308,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
64	2023	Portales	Enhance Healthy Living	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$871,875	\$997,000	\$997,000	100%	114%	No	No	No
65	2022	Portales	Portales Skatepark Phase 1 Design and Construction	Plan/Design; Construction	\$739,746	\$728,386	\$728,385	100%	98%	Yes	No	No
66	2022	Portales	Portales Rotary Park Playground Equipment Project	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$154,491	\$143,491	\$143,490	100%	93%	Yes	No	No
67	2022	Pueblo of Zia	T'siya Community Wellness Center and Park Planning and Design	Plan/Design	\$22,838,243	\$1,373,063	\$1,373,062	100%	6%	Yes	No	No



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
68	2022	Quemado	Quemado Community Center	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$600,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	100%	50%	Yes	No	No
69	2022	Questa	Questa Municipal Playground	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$112,454	\$112,454	\$112,454	100%	100%	No	No	No
70	2023	Raton	Raton Ball Complex Renovation Project	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$499,000	\$399,000	\$399,000	100%	80%	No	No	Yes
71	2023	Rio Arriba County	Rio Arriba Recreation Center	Construction	\$20,589,000	\$6,000,000	\$2,000,000	33%	10%	-	-	-
72	2023	Roosevelt County	Fair and Rodeo Grounds Enhancements	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,011,300	\$1,011,300	\$1,011,300	100%	100%	No	No	No
73	2023	Roswell	City of Roswell Skate Park Complex	Plan/Design	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$450,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
74	2023	Ruidoso	School House Park Renovation	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,380,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	100%	72%	Yes	No	Yes
75	2022	Ruidoso	Grindstone Disc Golf Course Pavilion	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$72,328	\$72,327	\$72,327	100%	100%	-	-	-
76	2022	Ruidoso	Eagle Creek Disc Golf Restroom Addition	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$63,924	\$63,923	\$63,923	100%	100%	-	-	-
77	2023	Ruidoso Downs	All American Park Paving and Drainage Improvements	Plan/Design; Construction	\$920,000	\$920,000	\$920,000	100%	100%	-	-	-
78	2022	San Jon	San Jon Park Improvement Project	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	100%	100%	-	-	-
79	2023	Sandoval County	Sandoval County Fairgrounds Improvements	Construction	\$232,610	\$232,610	\$232,610	100%	100%	No	No	No
80	2022	Sandoval County	Cuba Fairgrounds Recreation Center Gym Equipment	Furnish/Equip	\$62,778	\$62,778	\$62,778	100%	100%	No	No	No



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
81	2023	Santa Rosa	Santa Rosa Blue Hole Park Improvements	Plan/Design	\$4,101,720	\$211,720	\$211,720	100%	5%	No	No	Yes
82	2022	Sierra County	Arrey Baseball Field Construction	Construction	\$614,418	\$277,238	\$277,238	100%	45%	Yes	Yes	No
83	2023	Socorro (city)	Socorro Rodeo Complex Upgrades	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$923,417	\$923,417	\$923,417	100%	100%	No	No	No
84	2022	Socorro (City)	Socorro Convention Center	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$110,438	\$110,438	\$110,438	100%	100%	No	No	No
85	2022	Socorro County	Socorro Country Escondida Lake	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$225,000	90%	90%	No	Yes	No
86	2023	Socorro County	Escondida Lake Park Project Phase 1 Design	Plan/Design	\$123,302	\$123,302	\$123,302	100%	100%	No	No	No
87	2023	Sunland Park	Municipal Complex Artificial Soccer- Football Field.	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,327,368	\$877,368	\$877,368	100%	66%	No	Yes	No
88	2023	T or C	Louis Armijo Sports Complex Master Plan Development Project	Plan/Design	\$48,188	\$48,188	\$48,188	100%	100%	No	No	No
89	2022	Taos (Town)	Filemon Sanchez Fairgrounds Park Revitalization	Plan/Design; Construction	\$1,380,044	\$1,000,000	\$100,000	10%	7%	No	Yes	No
90	2023	Taos (Town)	Filemon Sanchez Sports Complex Plan and Design	Plan/Design	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$95,000	100%	100%	No	No	No
91	2022	Tor C	Ralph Edwards Park Improvements Phase II	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$465,219	\$465,219	\$449,019	97%	97%	No	No	Yes
92	2023	Tucumcari	Tucumcari Recreation Improvements	Plan/Design; Construction	\$3,631,332	\$2,479,332	\$2,000,000	81%	55%	No	No	Yes
93	2022	Tucumcari	City of Tucumcari municipal pool rehabilitation	Construction	\$356,803	\$216,803	\$216,803	100%	61%	-	-	-
94	2022	Tularosa	Tularosa Recreation Center Splash Pad	Plan/Design; Construction	\$924,866	\$924,866	\$924,866	100%	100%	No	No	No



	Year	Grantee Name	Project Title	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Award Amount	% of Request Funded	% Funded by RRC/QOL Award	CO Funds	Local Funds	Other Federal Funds
95	2023	Wagon Mound	Wagon Mound Rodeo Grounds Improvements - Bleachers	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$173,668	\$249,760	\$249,760	100%	100%	No	No	No
96	2022	Wagon Mound	Wagon Mound Rodeo Ground Improve	Plan/Design; Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$1,006,000	\$1,006,000	\$181,485	18%	18%	No	No	No
97	2023	Williamsburg	Williamsburg Recreational Park Equipment	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$176,348	\$176,348	\$176,348	100%	100%	No	No	No
98	2023	Zuni Pueblo	Zuni Fair Building Construction	Furnish/Equip; Construction	\$7,675,672	\$608,227	\$608,227	100%	8%	Yes	No	Yes



Appendix B. Scoring Rubric

2022 HB2 \$45,000,000

§To plan, design, construct, furnish and equip regional recreation centers and quality of life projects statewide. No more than twenty-seven million five hundred thousand dollars (\$27,500,000) of this appropriation shall be expended in a single fiscal year. Five million dollars (\$5,000,000) is from the general fund and the remaining amount is from the appropriation contingency fund.

- Economic Impact: Project must show demonstrable benefit to a local community with limited access to recreational activities, either by attracting and retaining residents or attracting visitors.
- Recreation Access: The project must be open for public use. Note: Projects on tribal lands are eligible and do not have to be open to the general public but should be open to tribal members.

Application Scoring

- 1. Recreational Impact Value: Level of improvement to the quality of life for regional residents. **30 Points Max**
- 2. Equity: Is this recreational project going to be in an underserved community with limited, or no other recreational opportunities? **20 Points Max**
- 3. Is there a comprehensive plan and a future funding source for the continued maintenance and programming of the facility? **10 Points Max**
- 4. Has this project been vetted and approved by the local public body? **10 Points Max**
- 5. Is the project shovel ready, how soon can it begin? 10 Points Max
- 6. Is the entity applying for this grant in fiscal compliance with the Department of Finance & Administration for their yearly budget and audit compliance? **10 Points Max**
- 7. Has this project been previously submitted for Capital Outlay or other funding sources? **5 Points** Max
- 8. Has the project received other state or federal funding? If so, how much and when? 5 Points Max

Eligible Expenditures

- § Plan/Design: Preliminary Engineering Report, planning and design
- § Equipment: indoor or outdoor equipment to include playground equipment, etc.
- § Construction: for small and large projects to include community centers, skateparks, splash pads, rodeo grounds, outdoor theaters, picnic shelters, or structures that enhance public based recreational activities

Prohibited Expenditures

§ Trail Systems	§ River Access
§ Trailheads	§ Heavy Equipment
§ Signage	§ Vehicles
§ Outdoor classrooms	

Budget

- § Proposals must include an adequate budget for the proposed project. The applicant should explain how the funds will be utilized. Budget revenue sources including outside sources of matching funding should be explained in detail.
- § Applicants must provide quotes or estimates. State and local procurement policies must be complied with for the duration of the project.
- § Any incurred project costs that occur prior to an executed contract are NOT eligible for reimbursement from the Department.
- § The Department reserves the right to offer an award amount different than the amount requested.



Mesa del Sol Regional Sports Complex

Bernalillo County's \$48 million Mesa del Sol sports complex is a large outdoor recreation project being built in phases, utilizing local, state, and federal funds. Aligning with the county's 2015 parks, recreation, and open space facilities master plan, the \$2 million recreation/quality of life grant awarded in 2023 will help complete phase 3, which is comprised of six grass playing fields complementing four new recently installed artificial turf fields. Prior capital outlay funding from 2020, 2022, and 2023 totaling \$1.4 million and \$2 million in federal ARPA funding contributed to the completion of phases 1 and 2 of this eight-phase project. The county also committed \$2.5 million in general obligation bonds through 2030 and received an additional \$5 million in capital outlay in 2024 for subsequent phases. Phase 3 construction begins May 2024 with site grading and infrastructure improvements and is expected to be completed in early 2025. The county holds a 40-year, 634-acre master lease with the State Land Office which encompasses the recreational complex, the Isleta Amphitheater, and a sublease with New Mexico United. Once complete with 31 fields, it will be the region's largest youth/adult sports facility. The county anticipates generating \$5.6 million in economic impact from sports events and \$3.4 million from hotel revenues annually.





County: Sandoval

Grant Amount: \$1.2 million

2020 Village Population: 628

Naturally Beautiful Park Expansion

The Village of Cuba is expanding and redeveloping its St. Francis of Assisi Park by installing new park furnishings, equipment, and a modular concession / bathroom facility. In 2023, the village received a \$1.2 million recreation / quality of life grant to complete all improvements in one phase. Additionally, Sandoval County provided \$10,000 for the modular building's foundation installation, and the village contributed in-kind site development work to cover utility connection costs. With these combined resources, the village expects to finish the park upgrades between August and September 2024 and plans to expend all funds by the end of FY25. Once completed, the redesigned park should be ADA-accessible, have new playground equipment, a bathroom/concession building, and connect to the surrounding trail. The village anticipates the expanded park will complement the newly constructed teacher housing located across the street.



Project Status	Percent Local Cost Share	Debt Taken to Complete	Date of Initial Funding	Project Completed
Pre-Construction	1%	No	2023	Expected: August- September 2024



Multipurpose Livestock Pavilion

Renewal of Curry County's 60-year-old fairgrounds is key to the county and city's efforts to revitalize the southside of Clovis. But though the multipurpose pavilion had been prioritized in master plans and was on the county's ICIP for 10 years, it was preempted by projects such as the detention center. The county funded planning and design for the project and had a shovel-ready project and 15 percent of the total project cost reserved when it received a \$6.5 million recreation / quality of life grant in 2022. After obtaining the grant, it began demolition of the old structures and construction of the new. A second recreation grant funded the purchase and installation of playground equipment at the fairgrounds and the county's first ADA accessible park. The 96 thousand square foot enclosed pavilion is intended to accommodate rodeos, livestock auctions and sales, concerts, weddings, home and garden shows, and more. It is expected to generate tourism from Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico and GRT revenue for the city and county. The county reports events that had once taken place at the fairgrounds were moved out of state due to its aging facilities.



No

2022

Expected: July 2024

17%

Construction



County: Luna

Grant Amount: \$1.2 million

2022 County Population: 25,316

Inflatable Water Park

Deming's ADA-accessible inflatable water park is a unique recreational facility for the local community and surrounding areas. The project was included in the city's infrastructure capital improvement plan and its latest comprehensive plan, and construction documents, an environmental assessment, and business plan were complete prior to applying for state funding. Proactive planning and design by the local entity supported prompt implementation of the \$1.2 million recreation / quality of life grant for the purchase and installation of a concession stand, picnic tables, and landscaping. The city's contribution of \$300,000 from its general funds covered unforeseen costs. The project was completed in June 2023 and opened to the public in July; the park is expected to annually serve residents from five surrounding counties and out-of-state visitors. Projected entry fee revenues will cover operational and maintenance costs and support replacement of the in 10 years. The water park is part of a larger recreation complex, which includes a lake, amphitheater, and walking trails. All funds will be spent by the end of FY24.



Project Status	Percent Local Cost Share	Debt Taken to Complete	Date of Initial Funding	Project Completed
Complete	20%	No	2022	June 2023



County: Cibola

Grant Amount: \$7.3 million

2022 County Population: 26,780

Multipurpose Arena Phase 1b

The Grants multipurpose arena is a multi-phase project being constructed on the site of the existing rodeo grounds. Once completed, the new arena will host a diverse range of events and is expected to drive increased tourism and economic activity. In 2019, the city received \$2.5 million in capital outlay funds, which led to the completion of land planning, site engineering, construction drawings, and a conceptual master plan. The city then secured a \$5.3 million recreation / quality of life grant in 2022, followed by a supplemental grant of \$2 million in 2023, and a Department of Tourism grant for \$384,000. The combined \$7.7 million will fund completion of the primary metal structure, sewer line extensions, ADA parking, walkways, grandstands, electrical improvements, sound system, site grading, and partial roadway. Phase 1b is expected to be complete by November 2024, with the awarded funds being fully expended before the close of FY25. Phases 2 through 7 are estimated to cost \$23.8 million. With continually rising construction costs, this estimate will likely increase. The city indicated it will seek funds for the remaining phases through capital outlay and the recreation grant program, if it receives additional funding. Completion of the entire project at the projected cost is likely to take many years through those sources.





Fitness Center and Plaza Project

Mora County initially planned to construct a recreational community center within the unfinished section of its courthouse using \$2.5 million in 2022 recreation / quality of life funds. However, design and engineering challenges in repurposing the complex for a conference center, tech incubator, and demonstration kitchen led to a revised plan in 2024. The new plan is to construct a separate fitness center building. Further changes include expanding the playground into an enhanced plaza adjacent to the fitness center. Architects are now designing just the fitness center and the plaza. Cost estimates have risen to \$4 million, exceeding the current \$2.5 million with no additional funds yet to be secured. Timelines for completing the construction documents and going to bid are unknown. Once complete, county residents could have an ADA-accessible fitness center with locker rooms and an improved public plaza. According to local officials, the project is needed to enhance recreational access for the community in the wake of the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire, which limited access to the forest, previously the primary recreational outlet for Mora County.



Project Status	Percent Local Cost Share	Debt Taken to Complete	Date of Initial Funding	Project Completed
Planning and Design	0%	No	2022	No