



NMSA Featured as Partner Organization for Two Finalists of \$160 Million U.S. National Science Foundation Federal Grant

LAS CRUCES, N.M. (August 4, 2023) – The New Mexico Spaceport Authority is officially one step closer to obtaining a portion of a transformational grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation which has the potential to set the agency – and the region - up as a key player in global technology areas for decades to come.

Announced Wednesday, August 2, by the NSF, both the Space Valley Coalition and UTEP were listed as one of 16 finalists from around the nation for the first-ever NSF Regional Innovation Engines (NSF Engines) competition. Comprising the only two finalists in the aerospace category, the proposals submitted by the Space Valley Coalition and UTEP were originally one of 188 which were submitted. That number was parsed down to 34 semifinalists in June of 2023 before the most recent round of cuts left the NSF with the 16 finalists.

Should either the Space Valley Coalition or UTEP emerge as a winner of the competition, each partner organizations who collaborated to create the entries have the opportunity to receive a portion of up to \$160 million over the course of a decade.

“Spaceport America is an incredible asset that has been supporting testing and operations for various aerospace clients for years, and is already helping transform the region economically,” remarked

Spaceport America Executive Director Scott McLaughlin. “As the region’s gateway to space, we compare the spaceport to areas that boast international harbors or intercontinental airports where businesses are created to support commerce created from the ports. Being a partner organization in the finalist proposals is an honor and a demonstration of why the spaceport was created in the first place,” McLaughlin added.

The New Mexico Spaceport Authority is one of the 10 organizations from throughout the states of New Mexico and Colorado that joined forces to submit an entry into the NSF Engines national competition. As recommended by the Space Valley Coalition, the New Mexico Trade Alliance spearheaded the grant and was joined by Central New Mexico Community College, Levado, LLC, Navajo Technical University, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partners, New Mexico State University, STEMarts Lab and the University of New Mexico in addition to NMSA.

Entitled *Space for Earth, Space for All: Space Valley’s Role in Securing America’s Economic and Political Future*, the Space Valley Coalition’s proposal is intended to position and leverage the current assets in place across Colorado and New Mexico with the hope of constructing the premier regional space industry innovation hub on the planet.

NMSA is also a partner organization in another finalist proposal, this one led by the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). *Paso del Norte Innovation for Defense and Aerospace (IDEA) Engine*, saw NMSA link up with the City of El Paso, the County of El Paso, the National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining, UTEP and Workforce Solutions Borderplex, Inc., to propose a regional hub for advanced aerospace and defense manufacturing.

The overarching goals of the IDEA Engine coalition are:

- Re-imagine the Paso del Norte region as an advanced manufacturing and knowledge-based economy.
- Re-invent the economy to produce catalytic growth that increases the share of jobs in advanced industries in the region from 3.2% to 25%.
- Re-deploy manufacturing capabilities to support U.S. aerospace and defense industries.

- Re-build the region's talent force with next generation STEM skills for aerospace and defense manufacturing, guaranteeing the entire community a path to the middle class.

As two of the 16 finalists from around the nation, the Space Valley Coalition, UTEP, and the partner organizations within each will be visited by various NSF representatives. These representatives serve as some of the main contributors to the final selection which will be unveiled by the close of the 2023 calendar year.

One year ago, the Space Valley Coalition made the cut as a finalist for the Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Challenge and received a \$500K Phase One award to continue Coalition building and strategic planning.

"Aerospace is a fast-growing industry in New Mexico with incredible potential to drive global innovation while creating quality careers in communities across the state," said Economic Development Department Deputy Secretary Jon Clark. "The State looks forward to welcoming the NSF to New Mexico and underscoring our commitment to making Space Valley the premier innovation ecosystem for the future of space."

[NSF Press Release](#)

[NSF Engines Program](#)

###

Launched by NSF's Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (TIP) and authorized by the "CHIPS and Science Act," the **NSF Engines** program uniquely harnesses the nation's science and technology research and development enterprise and regional-level resources. NSF Engines aspire to catalyze robust partnerships to positively impact the economy within a geographic region, address societal challenges, advance national competitiveness, and create local, high-wage jobs across the country.

Spaceport America (<https://www.spaceportamerica.com>) is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico, has a rocket-friendly environment of 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace, low population density, a 12,000-foot by 200-foot runway, vertical launch complexes, and about 340 days of sunshine and low humidity.

Some of the most respected companies in the commercial space industry are tenants at Spaceport America: [Virgin Galactic](#), [HAPSMobile/ AeroVironment](#), [UP Aerospace](#), and [SpinLaunch](#).

Media Contact for Spaceport America

Charlie Hurley | Public Information Officer

(575) 305-5257 media@spaceportamerica.com