



EDD

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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29 Interns Graduate from Outdoor Economy Workforce Training

*Outdoor Recreation Division sponsorship leads to over \$90,000
in student pay.*

SANTA FE, N.M. – The Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) has announced the second cohort of high school students to graduate from New Mexico's first paid outdoor industry internship program.

The program, sponsored by ORD, is run by Future Focused Education (FFE), an Albuquerque-based nonprofit that seeks to better connect underserved and nontraditional students to college and careers.

Since fall 2021, the paid outdoor internship program has placed 29 students with nine outdoor recreation industry employers in Taos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces. That represents more than a ninefold growth over the first cohort [ORD announced in September 2021](#), which included three interns.

When she created the ORD in 2019, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham identified the outdoor recreation industry as a key target sector to diversify the New Mexico economy. Since then, the office has invested approximately \$2 million in outdoor recreation grants and business programs, including the first-of-its-kind Outdoor Equity Fund and the state's first outdoor business accelerator. The outdoor industry contributes almost \$2 billion a year to the New Mexico's GDP and employs over 25,000 people, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

"New Mexico is proud to have such a thriving outdoor recreation economy, one of the target industries that Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has identified as being ripe for strong economic growth," New Mexico Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "It's very exciting to have programs like these that integrate our young people, helping

them gain new skills and connections, and building a future where they can have family-sustaining jobs and stay in New Mexico."

The \$15,000 sponsorship from ORD catalyzed over \$90,000 in funding that went directly to students who participated in the internship. The additional funding came from private employers in the program, as well as the Public Education Department's recovery act funds allocated to increase work-based learning in New Mexico. The students put in hundreds of hours with the employers, learning about outdoor education, grassroots agriculture, retail, hospitality management, conservation, watershed health, and more.

The nine participating outdoor employers are:

1. Forest Stewards Guild
2. Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
3. Laguna Pueblo Environmental Program
4. Los Poblanos Historic Inn and Organic Farm
5. Pueblo of Tesuque Farm
6. Reunity Resources
7. RiverSource
8. Santa Fe Children's Museum
9. Taos Ski Valley Inc.

"This innovative program connects young New Mexicans with fulfilling careers in the state's outdoor industry," ORD Director Axie Navas said. "Since fall 2021, this internship program has put over \$90,000 in wages in high school students' pockets' – students who might never before have considered working in environmental science, outdoor education, hospitality, conservation, and more."

"ORD's initial investment has had huge payoff when it comes to exposing outdoor recreation employers to the potential of hosting interns," Mike May, director of Workforce Learning at FFE, said. "The decision to subsidize internships costs for employers has catalyzed a sustained growth in employer participation."

Interns in the program were excited to get hands-on work/life skills. "My internship has helped me explore my interest in being a teacher and given me skills and experience in outdoor education," Gustavo Gonzales Batres, an Education Assistant at the Children's Museum said. "It's calming and relaxing to be learning outdoors. This has helped me maintain a positive outlook and be able to contribute to my community."

The paid internship came out of the Cradle-to-Career Outdoor Industry Strategy, supported by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program. The plan builds a pathway from pre-K through higher education for students interested in working in, and for, the outdoors, emphasizing early outdoor access through programs like the Outdoor Equity Fund, climate education, and real-world paid experience that opens doors to solid New Mexico careers in Tribal and rural areas.

Learn more by visiting the ORD website at [NMOutside.com](https://www.nmoutside.com).

To participate in the outdoor industry internship program as a school or employer, please contact FFE Director for Workforce Learning Mike May at mike@futurefocusededucation.org.



Spring 2022: A River Source intern assessing the conditions of stormwater outfalls for the City of Santa Fe.



Spring 2022: A Santa Fe Children's Museum Program Assistant doing a planting activity with kids

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The New Mexico Economic Development Department's (EDD) mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive. EDD's programs contribute directly to this mission by providing funding to train our workforce, providing infrastructure that supports business growth, and helping every community create a thriving economy. Since Jan. 1, 2019, EDD has supported more than 13,000 new jobs and trained 8,323 New Mexicans for better pay. EDD has utilized LEDA to make investments in 53 businesses, supporting more than 7,500 new jobs at an average wage of \$70,000, \$531 million in annual payroll, \$5.2 billion in new capital investment, and a ten-year economic impact of \$30+ billion. Thirty-nine communities across 22 counties have benefited from EDD programs.

New Mexico Economic Development Department
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