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Planned soundstage at NMSU expected to significantly boost local, state economies

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A planned \$15 million soundstage complex at New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Park is expected to attract film and television projects that will draw millions of dollars to the area and help creative media students earn valuable experience.

In June, the NMSU Board of Regents unanimously approved an agreement between the New Mexico Economic Development Department, NMSU and Arrowhead Center Inc. to build the 36,400-square-foot soundstage complex to be used for film and television productions. NMSU and Doña Ana Community College creative media students will also have opportunities for paid internships working on these productions, a key component of the project.

"This is a tremendous day for the film community in Las Cruces and southern New Mexico," said state Sen. Jeff Steinborn, president of Film Las Cruces who led the effort to secure funding for the Las Cruces soundstage. "Creating a studio and soundstage in Las Cruces has long been a goal of Film Las Cruces and local filmmakers, and this new facility will add extremely valuable film production infrastructure to our region. Having been named by MovieMaker Magazine as a top city in America to live and work as a filmmaker, this is a significant step forward in Las Cruces ability to continue to support high-quality film productions."



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Soundstages are large, soundproofed buildings that provide an essential capability for films to create sets in sound- and lighting-controlled environments. They are commonly used for creating unique film sets, or sets in series productions that use the same filming location for extended time periods.

The project is funded by NMEDD as part of the statewide Media Arts Collective Initiative to grow the state's film industry. Once completed, NMSU will lease the soundstage to a company that will be responsible for operations and maintenance and will either film their own productions at the complex, or lease out the complex to other production companies, said Wayne Savage, executive director of Arrowhead Park.

The company operating the complex will be selected through a request for proposals process, or RFP, the development of which has already begun. Savage said the hope is to have a company contracted by the time the complex is completed in January 2026.

"This soundstage complex at NMSU's Arrowhead Park is a game-changer for New Mexico's film industry," said Mateo Frazier, New Mexico Media Arts Collective acting executive director. "It bridges education and professional production, creating invaluable opportunities for our students while attracting major projects to southern New Mexico. This facility embodies our vision of a thriving film and media arts ecosystem that benefits our entire state. We're excited to work with NMSU, DACC and our labor and industry partners to further establish New Mexico as a premier destination for film and television production."

Arrowhead Center Inc. will manage the development of the complex that will be located south of DACC's Creative Media Technology building at Arrowhead Park, and near the location of the proposed NMSU Creative Media Institute building. All three buildings will be among the components that form the Las Cruces Creative Campus envisioned by Kevin Boberg, Ph.D., Arrowhead Center's first director and CEO and former NMSU vice president for economic development who passed away in 2021.

"Dr. Boberg was a strong believer in this colocation idea to benefit students, research and industry," Savage said. "This will bring lots of opportunities for students when they graduate, as well as have a significant economic impact on the community."

Savage said the soundstage complex is expected to create 200 new, full-time jobs and help increase the local film crew base that regularly works on film and television productions in the area. The complex has the potential to attract a TV series that will spend between \$12 million to \$15 million over a six-month period for food, lodging and other services. A mid-sized film project has the potential to spend about \$4 million over two months.

"The soundstage will be a real game-changer for southern New Mexico," said filmmaker Ross Marks, executive director of the Las Cruces International Film Festival and professor in NMSU's Creative Media Institute. "It will finally even the playing the field for us to attract film and television productions. It will be a full-service stage with all the amenities needed to attract everything from big studio shows to small independent films. I personally look forward to using it for several of my future projects. I know our students will benefit from all the internship opportunities the new stage will provide."

The agreement between NMSU, Arrowhead Center Inc. and NMEDD is for a total of 12 years, including the two-year development phase and a 10-year operations phase, after which NMSU can decide whether to continue with operation of the complex as a soundstage or convert it to serve other purposes.

Savage said the targeted groundbreaking date is sometime in the first quarter of 2025.

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PHOTO CAPTION: The New Mexico State University Board of Regents in June unanimously approved an agreement between the New Mexico Economic Development Department, NMSU and Arrowhead Center Inc. to build a 36,400-square-foot soundstage complex in Arrowhead Park that will be used for film and television productions. NMSU and Doña Ana Community College creative media students will also have opportunities for paid internships working on these productions, a key component of the project. (Courtesy)

IMAGE DESCRIPTION: Artist's rendering of the planned soundstage complex.

PHOTO CAPTION: The soundstage complex at New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Park will be part of the Las Cruces Creative Campus, which will also consist of Doña Ana Community College's Creative Media Technology building and the location of the proposed NMSU Creative Media Institute building (Courtesy)

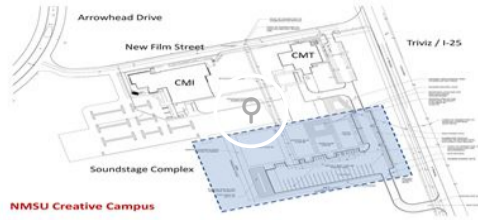
IMAGE DESCRIPTION: Map of Arrowhead Park.

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