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Santa Fe Studios surpasses \$10 million expectations

By Blake Driver
7 December 2015

Santa Fe Studios is required to create 500,000 job hours by next October in exchange for the \$10 million it received from the state in 2011, and it's already created five times that amount.

The film studios reported that it generated 2.74 million job hours for its first four years of operation since 2011, a five-fold increase over the amount it agreed to create when it received \$10 million from the state's Local Economic Development Act closing fund to build its facilities. All of the reported job hours were allocated to New Mexicans. The studios will no longer be required to report job hours for the fulfillment of its LEDA contract requirements.

Michelle Miller, a spokeswoman for the studios, said the campus has contributed \$19 million in spending in the greater Santa Fe area since opening, and that figure doesn't include spending on production services in other parts of the state.

"The spirit of the LEDA funding was to build a film studio that would act as an accelerator to create film-industry business that would spread throughout the state, and that's what it's done, because the film business is on wheels and mobile," Miller recently told Business First. "Santa Fe Studios can attract productions that wouldn't necessarily be attracted to New Mexico, and those jobs flow out to the best places around the state to film and work."

Miller says the numbers are evidence that **Santa Fe Studios** is acting as the film hub the

LEDA grant intended for it to be and that the industry is coming back very strong from the recession and from the retraction of the state's film incentives several years ago, both of which defined the grim economic climate of the facility's first year of operation.

"It all started in the recession," she said. "The state pulled back on the film incentives and caused confusion in the industry for the first couple of years, which were pretty slow. But the New Mexico Film Office announced that last year was the best year ever in film, so this is an ongoing validation of **Santa Fe Studios'** effect."

She said the lion's share of hours and productions have happened in the past two years, and that the major Hollywood production, "*The Magnificent 7*," that was being filmed there and around the state just wrapped, though the crew may be back for reshooting during the post-production period.

Though the studios are not currently booked, Miller said there's no reason to believe the positive trends won't continue.

"The holiday season tends to slow down, but I do know in January there are productions lined up," she said.

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