



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

Alicia J. Keyes
Cabinet Secretary

Amber Dodson
Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 29, 2023

Contact: Dolores Martinez
dolores.martinez@nmfilm.com

New Mexico Media Academy Announces Albuquerque Headquarters

Downtown Rail Yards location will serve as the academy's primary hub for entertainment industry job training and workforce development

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham announced today that the downtown Albuquerque Rail Yards will be the new headquarters for the New Mexico Media Academy. This collaborative workforce development initiative will equip New Mexico residents with the advanced skills they need to work in the film and television industry and launch them into high-paying jobs.

With a focus on the burgeoning digital media ecosystem in the state, the historic downtown Albuquerque Rail Yards will be the instructional headquarters for the Media Academy, with a companion campus to be located in Las Cruces. Gov. Lujan Grisham and the Legislature have committed capital and operating funds to further workforce training and on-the-job internships in the state's thriving film and television industry.

"State and city partnerships like these are how we create transformative change for New Mexicans. Our students will be trained by the best-in-the-industry and on state-of-the-art technology to further cultivate the film and digital media workforce and holistic ecosystem we are building in New Mexico," Gov. **Michelle Lujan Grisham** stated.

This growth aims to meet the increasing need for local professionals in the industry. Film production spending generated \$1.5 billion in direct spend into the state's economy in the past two fiscal years -- with most of that coming from outside the state. A record 109 productions (55 films and 54 television) were filmed across the state last year, including AMC's *Better Call Saul*, Netflix's *Stranger Things*, FOX's *The Cleaning Lady*, Peacock's *Poker Face*, and Amazon's *Outer Range*.

The New Mexico Media Academy will be constructed in the Boiler Room location of the Rail Yards. Once completed, the facility will offer industry-standard, hands-on, and craft-specific workforce training and job competencies for the film, television, and digital media industry, including emerging focus areas such as virtual and extended reality and volumetric production.

"The Rail Yards is an anchor for the surrounding community and downtown," Mayor Tim Keller said. "This is the culmination of years of intentional re-

investment. We look forward to having the New Mexico Media Academy be an active part of our community as coming generations of film professionals get trained right here at home for local careers."

Fifteen New Mexico post-secondary film and media institutions across the state have already agreed upon the core curriculum for students. Central New Mexico Community College will co-locate at the Railyards with the NMMA and share resources. Local voters approved \$7 million for the college to improve and expand its film training program, and funding will go toward designing and constructing the program at the Albuquerque Rail Yards. This includes the newly broken-ground NMMA creative campus in Las Cruces, which will partner with New Mexico State University and Doña Ana Community College.

"For more than 20 years, CNM has been supporting the growing workforce needs of the film industry in New Mexico," CNM President **Tracy Hartzler said**. "We're honored to join the State of New Mexico and the City of Albuquerque in this groundbreaking partnership to increase New Mexicans' access to high-quality training that leads to great jobs and economic growth for the film and digital media industry. By co-locating CNM's film and digital media programs with the New Mexico Media Academy at the Rail Yards, we'll build state-of-the-art training and production facilities to maximize the public's investment in growing the film industry and revitalizing Albuquerque's downtown communities."

The academy is centered on collaborative partnerships, with an ultimate goal of admitting 1,000 students annually. New Mexico Film Partners, Netflix, NBCUniversal, and 828 Productions, will collaborate with NMMA and offer paid apprenticeships to students. IATSE Local 480 will offer hours toward union membership for students who complete the apprenticeship, providing a faster start to their careers.

Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes also announced the inaugural executive director of the NMMA, Chad Burris (Chickasaw), an experienced filmmaker, producer, lawyer, and public policy advocate.

As founder of Indion Group of Entertainment Companies, Burris developed the country's first private film incentive for the state of Oklahoma. In addition to film, he has worked with various industries from construction, healthcare, and technology, to structure and close over \$100 million of credit equity transactions that contributed significantly to the overall growth and vitality of rural economic development across the country.

Formerly, Burris was counsel at the law firm of Doerner, Saunders, Daniel, and Anderson in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he practiced corporate transactional, entertainment, and Indian law. Prior to that, he served as associate counsel for an all-Native law practice representing Tribes and their members in state, federal and Tribal courts.

Burris' influence in the film industry is attributed to his work, producing award-winning films, including *Four Sheets to the Wind* and *Barking Water* by Sterlin Harjo, the spirit award nominated *Mosquita y Mari* by Writer/Director Aurora Guerrero and the New Mexico productions of Michael Winterbottom's *Killer Inside Me*, Natalia Leite's *Bare*, the award-winning holiday film *Santa Fake*, the award-winning Sundance film *Drunktown's Finest* by Sydney Freeland, and most recently Billy Luther's feature debut, *Frybread Face and Me*, premiering at this year's South By Southwest. He won the Mark Silverman Award for New Producers from the Sundance Institute, was nominated twice for the Spirit Producers Award, and is a

member of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences.

“I am honored to be chosen to lead the new media academy for New Mexico,” Burris said. “This new endeavor presents a fantastic opportunity for New Mexico and the entertainment industry. With the support of the state and assistance from the many great film programs comprising the consortium, this new media academy will be a leader in producing New Mexico talent and content on a scale never imagined. I look forward to making this a hub for all local talent and a launch pad for new ideas.”

Burris received his J.D. with an emphasis in Indian Law from the University of Tulsa Law School and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

“This is a game-changing day for New Mexico’s film industry. I can’t think of a more inspirational filmmaker, leader, and visionary than Chad Burris,” Keyes said. “With Chad at the helm of the New Mexico Media Academy, we have a proven professional who will position our state as a premier training hub for a new generation of media professionals, so they can work in this exciting industry and build a career right here at home.”

Across both campuses, the NMMA will house:

- Traditional sound stages
- Volumetric stages.
- Classrooms, offices, lab, post-production, and flex spaces
- Industry-standard equipment and technology

“With an iconic location and a Native award-winning filmmaker at the helm, we are confident the New Mexico Media Academy is poised to prepare students for the next generation of jobs and opportunities in our surging film, television, and digital media industry,” Amber Dodson, Director of the New Mexico Film Office, said.

The film industry now supports some 8,000 jobs across the state and the median wage of a film worker in New Mexico is about \$32 an hour.

For images and renderings, click [here](#).

###

The New Mexico Film Office (NMFO), a division of the Economic Development Department, works to ensure the longevity and progress of New Mexico’s film incentive, grow the film, television, and digital media industry, and expand entertainment economic opportunities for New Mexico businesses and residents.

- Named one of [Deadline’s Hot Spots](#).
- Three New Mexico cities were selected as [“2023 Best Place to Live and Work as a Moviemaker”](#) by *MovieMaker Magazine*.

To learn more, visit nmfilm.com.

The New Mexico Film Office
1100 S. St. Francis Drive, Suite 1213
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 476-5600

A division of the [New Mexico Economic Development Department](#)



The Economic Development Department's Mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.



New Mexico Economic Development Department | 1100 South St. Francis Dr, Joseph M. Montoya Building, Santa Fe, NM 87505-4147

[Unsubscribe](#)

lauren.longworth@edd.nm.gov

[Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by info@nmfilm.com