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CARL & MARILYNN THOMA FOUNDATION
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Thoma Foundation Support for Education and the Arts in Southern NM Starts with \$600,000

The University Art Museum at New Mexico State University and Ngage New Mexico have each received \$300,000 grants to be used over three years to support capacity building.

SANTA FE, NM - The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation, a private family foundation with offices in Santa Fe and Chicago, has made its first grants to support educational and arts nonprofit organizations in southern New Mexico. Ngage New Mexico and the University Art Museum (UAM) at New Mexico State University (NMSU) have each received a \$300,000 grant to be used over three years. These grants will help the two organizations build staff capacity and create greater impact within the communities they serve.

“What drew us to these two organizations was not only their strong leadership, but that both are at a critical inflection point in their growth,” said Holly Harrison, Director of the Thoma Foundation. “In the landscape of New Mexico philanthropy, the southern part of the state is frequently overlooked, so we also felt strongly about accelerating the innovation and collective impact efforts endemic to this region.”

These grants also speak to a larger shift within the Foundation towards a growing emphasis on bolstering education and career opportunities in rural and non-metro areas across four target states: New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Ngage New Mexico is the backbone organization behind the SUCCESS Partnership, a collective impact effort that represents a cross-sector of community partners who have come together to address systemic inequities and improve educational outcomes in Doña Ana County. Following the launch of the K-Career Coalition in November 2021, Ngage will leverage the Thoma Foundation grant to develop measurable goals, actionable objectives, key strategies, and deep-dive community partnerships with a data-informed and community-driven approach. The grant will also allow Ngage to strengthen their work in the rural communities of Doña Ana County, which include 37 *colonias*, or informal settlements that often lack basic utilities.

“It is vital that communities create effective pathways to give our children the best possible chance of success, by providing real choices about how to make the most of their potential and thrive in school and life,” said Executive Director, Lori Martinez. “We need our early childhood, K-12, higher education, and workforce sectors to intersect with one another intentionally and collaboratively, and that is why the Kinder-Career Coalition was formed in Doña Ana County. Funding from the Thoma Foundation helps lay the foundation so that Ngage and community collaborators in the SUCCESS Partnership can do the work necessary to make this happen.”

(more)

Situated within NMSU, a Hispanic-serving land grant institution, the University Art Museum (UAM) serves as an academic environment for the critical analysis of visual art while making culturally relevant and provocative conceptual art and artists accessible to the region. As the only contemporary art museum in southern New Mexico, the UAM is a cultural bridge between the expansive borderplex community and NMSU. This grant will allow the UAM to meet its goals of crafting an updated mission statement, setting up support structures for artists and community members to thrive in an equitable arts ecosystem in southern New Mexico, and impacting the way artists and audiences understand the borderlands regional culture. The UAM will further expand upon their successful community collaborations and build career pathways for arts professionals in New Mexico. UAM’s Thoma Foundation grant will allow the museum to expand its capacity by hiring a Curator of Education and Preparator. Both new roles will be teaching positions that will engage students in the process of programming and mounting exhibitions.

UAM’s Executive Director, Marisa Sage, said, “New Mexico is known as having a strong arts culture, but we have a limited number of museums outside of Albuquerque and Santa Fe. These institutions, mostly in northern New Mexico, often hire arts professionals from outside of the state. With Thoma Foundation support the UAM will build a museum that can hire, train, and help retain arts professionals in New Mexico.”

The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation recognizes the power of the arts and education to challenge and shift perceptions, spark creativity, and connect people across cultures. The Foundation lends and exhibits artworks and provides grants to support pivotal initiatives in the arts and education. The Foundation is based in Chicago, Illinois and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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