

## LANB Nurtures Path for Small Businesses to Thrive Through The Loan Fund

*By Damon Scott for Finance New Mexico*

If you're a community bank still headquartered in New Mexico, there will naturally be businesses knocking at your door for financial advice and loans. But sometimes, due to a bank's own regulations and requirements, some businesses won't qualify for certain loans, and they must be turned away.

Instead of giving up on the startups, nonprofits and small businesses that may fall outside of a bank's boundaries, institutions like Los Alamos National Bank (LANB) have found a way to keep them in New Mexico's financial ecosystem.

LANB chief executive officer John S. Gulas said it only makes sense for the bank to help keep the overall economy as healthy as possible. For Gulas and LANB — the largest community bank in the state — one solution has been an ongoing partnership with The Loan Fund. The nonprofit community development financial institution works with businesses and nonprofits that don't qualify for a traditional loan.

LANB recently made a \$500,000, zero percent interest loan to the organization, up significantly from a previous \$150,000 loan. It's a serious commitment in a relationship that has thrived since 2011. And it's one that effectively makes LANB the largest bank investor in The Loan Fund to date.

"Our increase was primarily based on [The Loan Fund's] history," Gulas said.

The history Gulas is referencing is The Loan Fund's more than 25 years as a community lender that has provided over \$72 million in loans throughout New Mexico to financially underserved businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofits — often those who typically are unable to get financing through traditional lending sources. Those loans and lines of credit have helped create or preserve more than 8,800 jobs. The Loan Fund also offers consulting and training to its clients.

The LANB relationship with The Loan Fund is not only based on history, said Gulas, but trust.



“It is our hope that by supporting their mission, additional opportunities will be given to those who do not qualify for traditional loans,” said Gulas. The relationship only helps to strengthen the state’s economy by preserving and creating jobs, which in turn supports the state’s banks and other institutions, Gulas said.

After working with The Loan Fund, clients often return to explore options available from traditional banks such as LANB.

The Loan Fund’s clients are a diverse group. They include businesses in industries such as healthcare, education and construction. Restaurants, nonprofits, trucking companies, and others are among its clients.

“[The Loan Fund supports] over 30 minority and women-owned businesses and startups,” said Gulas. “It’s a broad breadth of organizations.”

Gulas added that LANB provides similar assistance to Homewise, the Santa Fe-based homeownership and financial counseling organization.

“We have a long history of supporting charitable organizations — 300 or more,” said Gulas.

LANB has six locations across the state. For more information, visit <https://lanb.com>. To learn more about The Loan Fund, visit <http://loanfund.org>.

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