

GGEDC to use new grant to create jobs

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A Gallup nonprofit that focuses on economic development just received the largest private donation in its history to create high-paying jobs in the city and McKinley County.

Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation announced a \$1.25 million donation from Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association, a not-for-profit power supplier cooperative.

Tommy Haws, board president of the GGEDC, stated that the funds are significant given the closure of the Escalante Generating Station, the “indefinite idling” of Gallup Refinery by Marathon Petroleum Corp. and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have all placed the region’s economy under “great stress.” Escalante was a 125-megawatt power plant located in McKinley County that was operated by Tri-State until it closed in August 2020. MPC shuttered its crude oil processing facility in Gallup and Martinez, Calif. the same month due to decreased product demand as a result of the pandemic.

“We are grateful for this donation from Tri-State and their recognition of the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation as the primary local leader to drive economic diversification in Gallup-McKinley County,” Haws said.

In an email to the *Gallup Sun*, Michael Sage, deputy director of GGEDC, wrote that his organization will “leverage this new fund along with its industrial knowledge and economic development skillset to help new catalytic projects which will create new jobs.”

Sage said these projects are ones that create “the opportunity to produce rapid and high levels of job creation and private investment.”

Sage pointed to Rhino Health’s decision to have a surgical glove manufacturing plant in McKinley County as one example of a catalytic project. That might give GGEDC the incentive to recruit other manufacturers to the area. The GGEDC might also ask other companies if they want access to rail, now that Carbon Coal Road connects U.S. Highway 491 to the Gallup Energy Logistics Park, Sage said.

GGEDC Executive Director Patty Lundstrom believes the grant from Tri-State will “maintain the

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great momentum” from her nonprofit’s work with the McKinley Paper Company, which received \$5 million from the state last year to install new equipment and keep the plant running, saving over 100 jobs and creating another 10. The company had relied on the Escalante Generating Station for power.

GGEDC was founded in 2012 to help create jobs in McKinley County. The nonprofit launched a business retention and expansion program that has operated for eight years.