NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

National New Deal Art Museum

Part I: Feasibility Study

June 30, 2025









chiodo DESIGN

Woven Architecture

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

2.0 OVERVIEW 10

Introduction to Project 11

21st Century Museum Qualities & Standards..... 12

Methodology 13

3.0 FINDINGS & ANALYSIS 15

Summary of Findings 16

Benchmarking & Competitive Analysis 33

Benchmarking Chart 35

Operational Analysis 36

Market & Audience Assessment 38

New Mexico Cultural Landscape 38

4.0 POTENTIAL MODELS & SWOT ANALYSIS 40

Potential Models 41

Strengths & Opportunities 44

Challenges & Risks 46

5.0 POTENTIAL SITE & BUILDING 48

Site Location 49

Building Needs 54

6.0 POTENTIAL INTERPRETIVE APPROACH 64

Introduction 65

Strategic Framework 65

Potential Museum Concept 66

Positioning 68

Potential Key Offerings 69

Interpretive Themes 70

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION 71

Recommendations 72

Conclusion 74

For research background information please see "Part II Reference Material" of this Feasibility Study

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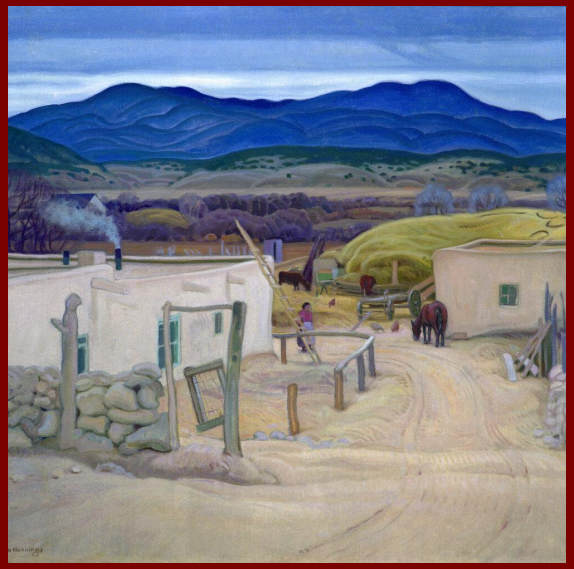






01 Executive Summary

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Icon of the Federal Art Project

This Feasibility Study for the potential of creating a National New Deal Art Museum (NNDAM) in New Mexico is respectfully submitted by Gail Anderson & Associates, chiodo.DESIGN, and Woven Architecture. As New Mexico-based firms, we are humbled to undertake this work on behalf of our state and as residents of New Mexico. The charge of this Study is both personal and one of a deep commitment to provide our best work, research, and recommendations with the honesty and respect this project deserves.

The purpose and objectives of the Feasibility Study (study) were to explore and research four key components as outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP), as presented by the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), by providing:

- An overall analysis and recommendation on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relative to a proposed National New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico.
- A broad analysis with recommendations on potential building requirements to house a museum of this kind.
- Recommendations on potential business and funding models.

An analysis of proposed locations. The Study addresses the issues mentioned above and was compiled by undertaking research, conducting interviews, and analyzing findings to determine the viability of a National New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico. It culminates with recommendations and conclusions.

One of the great privileges of undertaking this study was the opportunity to speak with over twenty-four individuals in New Mexico and across the country through interviews about the possibility of a NNDAM. The overall range of interviews were conducted with museum professionals and arts administrators, New Deal specialists and scholars, government officials, and financial and fundraising experts. Significant interviewees included Rose Eason, Executive Director, gallupARTS; William Harris, Director, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum; Richard Walker, Director, The Living New Deal, University of California; Myriam Springuel, Former Director, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibitions (SITES); Kathryn (Kathy) A. Flynn, Founder of the National New Deal Preservation Association (NNDPA), New Mexico Chapter and former Deputy Secretary of the State of New Mexico; and Matthew McQueen, New Mexico State Representative, House District 50, and sponsor of the legislative request for an RFP for a National New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico. Additionally, the team would like to thank Michelle Gallagher Roberts, Deputy Secretary of the DCA, for serving as both an interviewee and leading the project for the DCA. A full list of interviewees is featured in Part II: Research and Reference Materials.



"Grazing Horses" by Gene Kloss

New Deal art remains of great interest to those who have dedicated considerable effort to studying Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, including through art, artists, rural and civil programs, to name a few. Given that this period, 1933-1943, was nearly 100 years ago, it is not surprising that the New Deal's visibility and appreciation seem little known by younger generations, although it is generally appreciated and known by art aficionados and Americans over 50 years of age. The presence of New Deal art (and other programs, not generally referenced in the study) throughout New Mexico is striking, as revealed by dedicated individuals such as Kathy Flynn, who amassed an inventory of New Deal art, structures, Civilian Conservation Corps camps, and parks/monuments throughout the state. Almost every town in New Mexico has some documented art from the period, whether paintings, photography, murals, architecture, or other architectural features such as water fountains. Much of this art is in situ and not movable, and includes murals located in post offices, courthouses, libraries, and other public buildings.

It should be noted that all New Deal art is the property of the federal government and is managed through the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) with two collection storage facilities located in Washington, D.C., and Denver, Colorado. New Deal art, a portion of the overall art that GSA owns and manages for the federal government, is in museum collections across the country and in federal buildings, although some New Deal art is in private collections. GSA makes long-term loans to museums in the spirit of giving the public access, including to art from this distinct period. Based on the complexities and status of New Deal art collections, amassing a collection for a new museum is complicated due to art in situ, limited access to GSA collections, and the unknown items of New Deal art in New Mexico (and other) museums that could be accessed or borrowed. The absence of a clearly defined, accessible, and available collection remains an obstacle to creating a new museum with a permanent collection. Due to federal downsizing and proposed budget cuts in 2025, it is unclear what level of collection loans are currently possible with GSA. It was learned as the study was being finalized that GSA staff who oversee the federal arts collection, including New Deal art, was reduced from 30 to fewer than 10, and that management of the collections may be changing as a result [1].

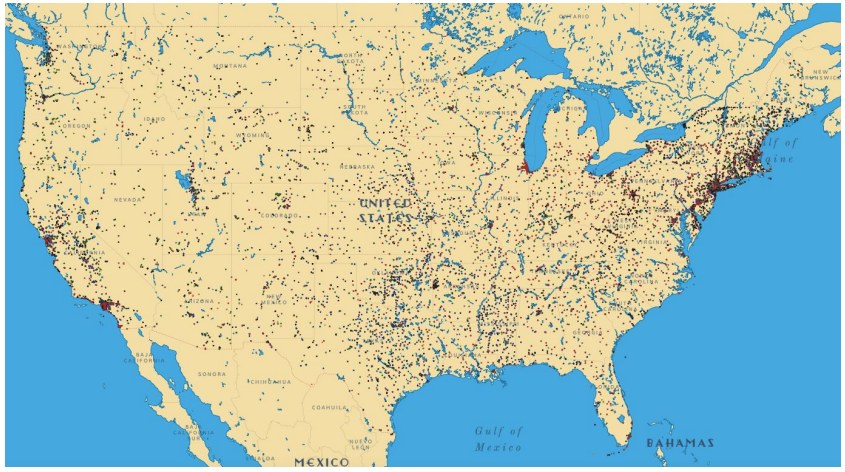
Given that one of the core aspects of this study was to explore the possibility of a “national” museum, the research revealed several realities. First, any museum wishing to be established as a national museum and also a part of the Smithsonian Institution is in a highly competitive environment. There are at least two significant “national” museums in the queue to become part of the Smithsonian Institution (these must be approved by Congress); both have been underway for years (with a potential opening in mid-2030). Numerous national parks in New Mexico such as Chaco Canyon National Historic Park, garner the title “national,” befitting the ancient ruins of the Anasazi; these are partially supported by the federal government. Some museums seek Congressional approval to carry the moniker of “national” in their name, such as the National Nordic Museum in Seattle, but this occurs only after many years of the specific museum being in existence and a proven track record of success, and does not guarantee federal funding support.

[1] Graham Bowley, Robin Rogrebin, and Lydia DePillis, “Trump Cuts Leave Few Caretakers for a Massive Federal Art Collection,” New York Times, June 8, 2025.

The National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque bears the title “national,” however, this was created by the New Mexico Legislature and is not tied to a larger national institution. As of the writing of this study, seeking the title “national” for a museum celebrating and representing a federal program located in New Mexico, particularly in the search for potential federal or congressional funding, is unlikely and not recommended.

The requirements for undertaking a new museum necessitate a viable and relevant concept with the appropriate planning, resources, and leadership in place. Every new museum must have a champion or champions who believe in the vision, guide the project through idea to completion, make significant financial investments in the project, and engender community and donor support. Though this may be one person, often there are multiple - one with considerable financial resources paired with another who exudes the passion for the content and concept of the project. During interviews, the team identified a number of passionate, dedicated individuals to the spirit of the New Deal in New Mexico. The team also did not identify a champion with financial capacity (or interest); nor an institution that could support the NNDAM at this time. Some of the financial and fundraising experts interviewed for this study stated that a financial champion is one of the most essential requirements for any project to move forward.

The financial and management demands of running a free-standing museum are essential to understand from the beginning. Any prospective new museum requires a master planning process that sets forth a clear mission, vision, and desired impact in the community and region, diverse strategies for the visitor experience and public engagement, a governance and staffing plan, an appropriate operation to support the museum, fundraising feasibility study, market study, and a capital campaign strategy. The capital campaign should cover the design and construction of the building, a ramp-up strategy for staffing and program development, with a percentage of total contributions directed toward an endowment. Further, a solid master plan outlines a clear financial picture of the costs of operating a free-standing museum with defined and diverse sources of revenue to support the museum annually, including interest generated from an endowment.



Map of New Deal Art Locations Across the USA

The cultural and arts landscape in New Mexico is robust with private institutions, the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs portfolio of museums and historic sites, a preservation division, library services, arts, and the office of the Cabinet Secretary with program services. The largest concentration of arts and cultural institutions is based in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, followed by Las Cruces and Taos. When examining the possibility of a location for a potential museum, several criteria were used, including population, tourism numbers, economic capacity to support the museum long-term, accessibility, potential impact on the community, and viability for a successful operation of a museum dedicated to New Deal art. While towns such as Silver City, Alamogordo, and Taos were considered, they did not meet the criteria used in this study. Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces were identified as locations with the most potential for success. It should be noted that support for a New Deal art museum in Gallup was endorsed by the New Mexico Chapter of The Living New Deal, given the historic McKinley County Courthouse, coupled with the ongoing efforts of gallupARTS to spotlight New Deal art. Thus, Gallup was also added to the final locations assessed. Though Albuquerque and Santa Fe ultimately topped the potential list, there is not necessarily a “right” location or choice at this time, especially considering the absence of a financial champion for the project. This is discussed further in Section 5. Potential Site & Building.

Financial concerns regarding the success of a new museum emerged based on several factors. One significant factor is the current economic climate, as the federal administration has cut and rescinded grants made by federal agencies, and the uncertainty around the anticipated rise of the cost of goods and operations. For many, not just in New Mexico, this time is particularly challenging for those wanting to launch a new project. Further, many interviewees cited donor fatigue in Santa Fe in particular, where a relatively small donor base is tapped regularly to support arts, cultural, and performing arts entities year-round. Given that nonprofit museums need to have a robust base of private contributions complemented by earned income strategies, this became another point of concern for the viability of a new museum to create and sustain.

After careful consideration of all the factors, the team’s final recommendation is not to pursue a National Museum of New Deal Art in New Mexico at this time. This is captured in these core points of consideration:

- It is unclear how well New Deal art is known by the broader public. Significant research is advised to assess and gauge interest throughout the state through marketing studies and analysis. The scope of this study did not provide the resources to conduct solid market research.

- The concept of a “National” New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico is not a realistic aim at this time.

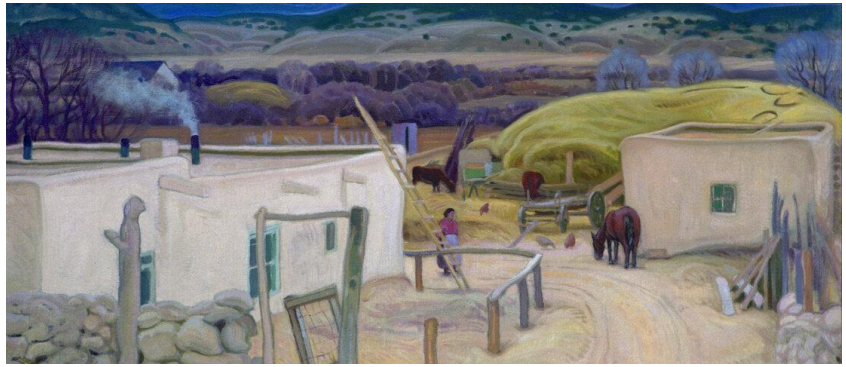
- The absence of both an identified champion with significant financial resources and an individual/organization that has the capacity to lead and support this project raises concern, given that museum projects are costly, long-term endeavors.

- The passionate supporters of New Deal art in New Mexico, identified throughout this study, should be tapped as appropriate due to their longtime involvement and deep knowledge about New Deal art within the state.

- Given the current economic climate, it is wise to pause and explore the level of public and financial interest and fundraising potential, as mentioned above.

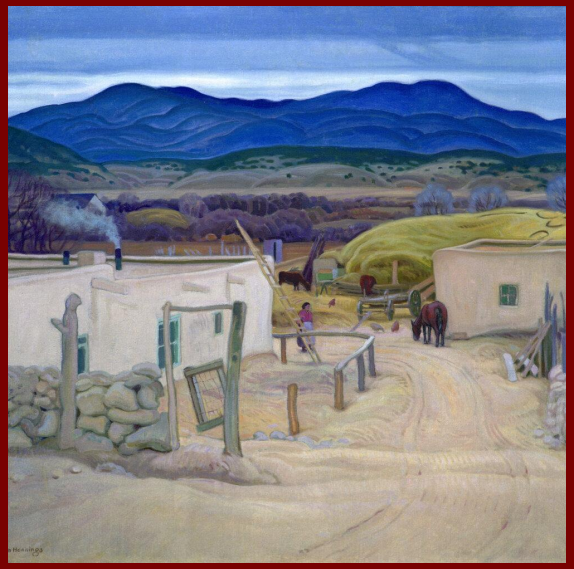
- If at some point in the future, the vision for a New Deal Art Museum moves forward, significant fundraising will be necessary to undertake master planning with clarification of annual operating expenses.

- A clear location for a prospective museum did not emerge given the criteria needed, especially the financial and audience viability, as well as the lack of identification of a champion (often tied to a place). Further, it was proffered by many interviewees to not consider Santa Fe due to its oversaturation and to explore other parts of the state.



Close-up of "Across the Valley" by Martin Henning

Please know that the recommendation is not to be interpreted as a negative view about the validity of sharing New Deal art with the public, in New Mexico or elsewhere. If curiosity is strong enough, alternative solutions may provide a way to establish additional interest, financial support, and viability. One alternative solution the team identified includes partnering with the Department of Tourism to highlight New Deal art across the state. Another alternative is to approach an existing museum that exhibits art and has some New Deal art in its collection to mount an exhibit about New Deal art to bring visibility to this significant period of art in American history (and New Mexico in particular). Yet another idea is to consider an incubator concept with programming for youth and adults that mirrors the spirit of the New Deal, potentially through a collaborative effort such as working with an arts school, collaborating with the Midtown Arts and Design Alliance in Santa Fe, or with an existing studio. Regardless of the approach, external funding will need to be secured, along with finding a leader with the passion to keep the project moving forward.







02 Overview

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF
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INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

This study for NNDAM has been undertaken in alignment with the requirements of the original RFP issued on May 29, 2024, by the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). The following pages outline the research, findings, and recommendations undertaken during a yearlong effort.

The Feasibility Study is presented in two separate documents:

- **Part I: Feasibility Study** provides the results of the research, study, and analysis of the scope of work that culminates in the recommendations by the team.
- **Part II: Research & Reference Materials** presents the full list of interviewees, relevant charts, detailed research, and findings that support this Feasibility Report. A detailed explanation of building considerations clarifies the complexities of building a new museum.

The components of the study are presented in these sections.

Part I: Feasibility Study

- **Executive Summary** a high-level recap of the study with key takeaways
- **Overview** an introduction to the study, and a description of the methodology the team used to gather information and formulate final recommendations.
- **Findings and Analysis** the main portion of the study featuring:
  - Summary of findings
  - Benchmarking and operational analysis featuring a comparative chart of museums and arts organizations, useful for this study.
  - Market and audience assessment, including a review of the New Mexico cultural landscape.
- **Potential Models & SWOT Analysis** with various operating options and viability
- **Site & Building** with location assessment and infrastructure consideration.
- **Potential Interpretive content and visitor experience** capturing the essence of approaches to capitalize on the art and stories of New Deal art and artists, and the tenets of engaging visitor experiences.
- **Recommendations** and potential options for moving forward.

Part II: Research & Reference Materials

This supporting document includes:

- Interview participants and site visits
- Museum Industry (national museum list, AAM Museums Standards, Capital Campaign Fundraising Timeline, master planning materials)
- Building Physical Needs
- Research on the New Deal, New Deal Art Programs, and New Deal Art Collection
- Research on New Mexico (demographics, tourism trends, cultural landscape, museum operations in the state)
- Select Bibliography & Reference

21st Century Museum Qualities & Standards

When considering the establishment of a new museum, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Accreditation Standards outline the standards expected of museums, their leadership, care of collections, and professional operations.

Museums are valued cultural institutions that contribute to the fabric and identity of a community, a place, cultures, and histories relative to a particular region, country, and global location. Museums are created with a specific focus and mission (purpose) based on the scope of their collections, public engagement strategies, location, and long-term goals in service to the audiences, communities, and visitors specific to each institution.

As listed in the AAM Ethics, Standards and Best Practices: Characteristics of Excellence, the standards fall into seven core categories. Each of those categories outlines the standards and characteristics, plus the required policies, processes, oversight, internal coordination, operations, and due care on behalf of the public that the museum serves. The categories are:

- Public Trust and Accountability
- Mission and Planning
- Leadership and Organizational Structure
- Collection Stewardship
- Education and Interpretation
- Financial Stability
- Facilities and Risk Management

In addition to implementing the national standards, there are realities that every museum must consider in order to remain relevant in an ever-changing environment. Museums exist in an extremely competitive world, and as such, must exercise responsiveness on all levels of operation and activities to be dynamic, interactive, and inclusive institutions to survive.

In brief, the expectations of museums require:

- Strategic responses to trends and community realities that are germane to a specific museum.
- Relevance and responsiveness to diverse audiences.
- Consistency of brand and external communication.
- Tech-savvy operations and access for user engagement.
- A diverse menu of multiple ways to engage the public onsite and online.
- Collaborations and partnerships with others to expand reach and impact.
- Inclusive accessibility and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Flexibility to respond to timely external shifts.

METHODOLOGIES



"Taos Chapel" by Tatum Regina Cooke

The assessment strategies are grounded in a mixed-method approach that blends qualitative insights with comparative research and strategic analysis.

- **Ongoing communication** is a critical component throughout the Feasibility Study for transparency, alignment, and responsiveness. Regular updates and feedback sessions with DCA allow for evolving political realities and feasibility assumptions, and continuous refinement of the conceptual model. The team met regularly to monitor progress, provide updates on information collected, address challenges, and revise action items.

- **Informational interviews** with museum leaders, content experts, nonprofit arts leaders, fundraisers, cultural professionals, New Mexico politicians, and potential partners provide a foundational understanding of state, regional, and national realities and interests. These conversations help identify unique opportunities, potential challenges, and community realities that inform the early conceptual framing of a possible NNDAM. Every effort was made to create a cross-section of individuals, resulting in twenty-four interviews. See the full list of interviewees in Part II: Research and Reference Materials.

- **A review of literature** from museum-industry studies, academic papers and research, General Services Administration (GSA) materials, Census reports, to news articles provides a well-rounded understanding of the cultural and operational landscape. This research is further supported by an analysis of state demographics and tourism trends, which are essential to understanding the potential audience base. See a full bibliography in Part II: Research & Reference Materials.

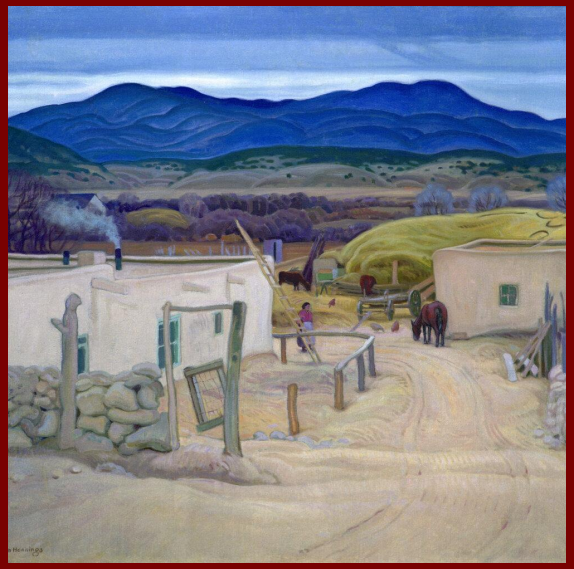
- **Benchmarking** against comparable institutions—state, regional, national, and those with a New Deal focus—provides context for understanding existing business models and practices. This process includes an in-depth review of locations, operational structure, total expenses/operating budget, cost per visitor, staffing size, annual attendance, number of objects in the collection, membership numbers, and facility size. Competitive analysis further enhances this understanding by examining the cultural economy to determine how a new museum could differentiate itself, fill existing gaps, and collaborate with, complement, or learn from other institutions. These insights are used to identify strategic positioning opportunities and to evaluate the potential demand and sustainability of the proposed museum.

- **SWOT Analysis** examines and identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding the potential for a museum dedicated to New Deal art in New Mexico and is based on the range of characteristics and considerations at play for this study. The SWOT was initiated approximately mid-way through the process and then refined in mid-spring to inform the final recommendations made in this study.

- **Project Modeling** encompasses exploring the potential options for what a NNDAM could be and explored different model types, collection sources, potential offerings (or programs), and possible high-level discussion of locations. This modeling was reviewed and updated throughout the timeline of this study as it was informed by research, interviews, and brainstorming sessions with the team.



Untitled by Nils Hogner







03 Findings & Analysis

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



"Conquistadors" by Tom Lea

This summary of findings was informed by key research questions to ascertain the viability of an NNDAM in New Mexico. The methods of probing into these key areas are a blend of research, interviews with experts, and the combined experience of the team charged with this work.

Examples of key questions that influenced the research and interviews:

- **New Deal Art**
  What defines New Deal art?
  Where is New Deal art located, both in New Mexico and nationally?
  What are the distinctions between New Deal art and New Deal-era art?

- **National Museums**
  How does a museum engender the title of "national?"
  Does "national" in the name align with federal funding?
  Would a "national" museum dedicated to New Deal Art be feasible in New Mexico, given the national scope of this federal program?

- **Collaborations & Partnerships**
  Who is currently engaged with studying and displaying New Deal art?
  What are the efforts of these entities, and how might that relate to this proposed effort in New Mexico?

- **External Environment for Museums**
  What are the current realities of the federal administration relative to supporting museums, the arts, and culture?
  What aspects of the external environment will influence the potential of this project moving forward?
  What is the composition of the landscape of arts and culture in New Mexico? How does that factor into the prospect of locating and launching a new museum?

  - **Museum Operations Details & Trend**s
    What are the requirements for operating a new museum dedicated to New Deal art? What does the staffing model look like?
    What is the potential for using collections in a new museum?

  - **Financial Requirements & Expectations** for a new museum
    Are there donors or champions who can fund or underwrite this project?
    What financial resources would be needed for master planning, mounting a capital campaign, and supporting the ongoing operation of a museum?
    What is the potential of a donor base in New Mexico? Beyond?
    Is federal funding an option?

  - **Organizational Structure**
    What would be the governance/leadership model?
    Is the organization a separate nonprofit or a collaborative partnership?
    What alternative models should be considered?
    What level of staffing would be needed to operate a museum?

  - **Visitor Experiences & Audiences Potential**
    What are the expectations of museum visitors today?
    What is the level of interest in New Deal art?
    What experiences would be possible when featuring New Deal art?

New Deal Art

Defined & Federally Owned

New Deal Art: Definition + Locations

The New Deal public art programs produced thousands of portable artworks, including sculptures, paintings, photography, prints, and furniture, between 1933 and 1943 through four programs: **Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), The Section of Fine Arts (The Section), Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), Works Progress Administration and the Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP).** The portable art created through the New Deal art programs is all owned by the Federal Government. Today, this art is a part of the Fine Arts Collection managed, cared for, preserved, and administered by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). A portion of this collection is on permanent or temporary installation in federal buildings or housed in GSA's storage facilities (including ones in Washington, D.C., and Denver). Many collection items are on indefinite loan to museums, libraries, schools, hospitals, and other public institutions across the United States.

The GSA oversees the identification and tracking of New Deal works of art, ensuring coordinated stewardship and oversight. An unknown amount of New Deal art, knowingly or unknowingly, is held by private collectors, and GSA actively works to locate, identify, and recover lost portable artwork and place it into the custody of the Federal Government.

In addition to portable artwork, the New Deal art programs also included other artistic expressions of music, theater, murals, architecture, and architectural features, including water fountains. Thus, much of this art is fixed in a specific location, and the condition of site-specific New Deal Art varies widely from art in mint condition to art and buildings in disrepair. Conflicts in stewardship have arisen when New Deal buildings are slated for sale or demolition.

New Mexico New Deal Artwork

New Deal art exists in communities, rural and urban, across New Mexico. Almost every community has evidence of art or architecture created during this era. Over 178 different artists are documented with at least one piece of art or even several in locations across the state. Whether a mural in a school or the façade of a building, or paintings held by a Women's Club, New Deal art appears to be largely untapped, missing an opportunity to tell another part of the story of a people, place, or town. The artists that received funding include Indigenous, Hispano, and white artists known for their paintings and sculptures. In many cases their work depicts scenes, landscapes, everyday life, and people from their communities. Today, some of this work is considered a time capsule of this ten-year period from 1933 – 1943. This art represents the people and heritage of an era and has value worth preserving and sharing with the public.

New Deal Artwork vs. New Deal-Era Artwork

A nuance that could factor into the development of a new art museum is the delineation of New Deal art versus New Deal-era art. New Deal artwork refers specifically to art commissioned and/or produced under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs. These works were intentionally created as part of public employment initiatives to support artists during the Great Depression while making art accessible to the broader public. However, New Deal-era artwork encompasses a broader range of artistic production created during the same period but not necessarily funded by New Deal programs. This includes works produced independently by artists, reflecting the social, political, or cultural atmosphere of the era without being part of a government initiative. At times, New Deal-funded artists were creating work outside of their federal commissions, often with incomplete records or inventory lists; thus, artwork from this period can become complicated and contentious relative to its authenticity as official New Deal art. A new museum will need to consider whether it will exhibit and interpret government-funded art only or the more expansive New Deal-era art that could incorporate a more diverse range of subjects, perspectives, and artistic styles.

Significant Interest

Significant Interest in the New Deal & New Deal Art

Those who have dedicated considerable time to researching, exhibiting, and exploring the contributions of the art of the New Deal have a significant interest in continuing to tell the story of this period of time and how it continues to impact our society today. This interest stems from a deep passion for sharing the lasting impact of the New Deal programs undertaken across the United States. During the New Deal period multiple programs, from broad sweeping national programs such as Social Security to extensive art programs, were supported to help a nation recover from the crippling, financial effects of the Depression of 1930. New Mexico ranked high in New Deal spending per capita as one of the poorest states during the Depression, improving infrastructure and addressing the effects of the Dust Bowl. [2] The goal of infusing financial support for artists in rural and urban communities across the country was a central emphasis of New Deal programs. Due to the length of time since its inception, now almost 100 years, in general, the public is unaware of the lasting impact of the New Deal, and New Deal art programs in particular. At the same time, this style of artwork is also making a renaissance, the "what is old is new again" phenomenon. On the other hand, the team noted through informal conversations, that younger generations may be less familiar with or have no familiarity with New Deal programs in general, and with New Deal art in particular.

[2] Richard Melzer, *Buried Treasures: Famous and Unusual Gravesites in New Mexico History* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2007).

National Museums

National Name Classification

"National" Museums Designation Come in a Range of Ways

Some museums in Washington D.C. and New York that are part of the Smithsonian Institution, or those in the National Parks system, bear the title "national," are federally operated, and receive some federal or congressional funding. However, the majority of "national" museums are nonprofits, self-appointed, and have declared their own national scope. Some are recognized by an Act of Congress as a "national" museum with support from both state and federal politicians, but do not receive any direct federal support, such as the National Nordic Museum in Seattle, though this required solicitation and approval from the US Department of the Interior. Others like the National World War II Museum in New Orleans receive infrequent Congressional Appropriations (Department of Defense funding bill). Through interviews, it was learned that it is rare that a museum starts its existence with the moniker of "national" in its name, with the exception of museums that are a part of the Smithsonian Institution.

Further, the Smithsonian Institution has two major new museums in the queue, officially approved and in development: the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum (not to be confused with the National Women's History Museum, a virtual museum) and the National Museum of the American Latino. Both long-term projects are slated to open in mid-2030. In 2022, Congress directed that new Smithsonian museums will be funded with equal amounts of federal appropriations and private contributions, called the 50/50 public-private funding model. In short, it is a highly competitive process to secure Congressional funding for a museum, and based on interviews, it was stated that the possibility of receiving congressional funding for a museum of New Deal art, regardless of location, is highly unlikely if not impossible.



Close-up of "Convicts Mining" by Oden Hullenkremer

Collaboration & Partnerships

Collaboration & Access

Potential collaborations may create access to New Deal art.
There is alignment between this proposed project and the mission and goals of the GSA. Over the years, the GSA has worked with organizations holding New Deal art and engaged in long-term loans so the art can be made accessible to the public. Opportunities exist that could leverage partnerships with other organizations engaged in studying the New Deal and its impact, and exhibiting and preserving New Deal art. However, in Spring 2025, the US Government downsized the GSA workforce, including cuts to the team managing the Fine Arts Collection. It is not clear at this time how and in what ways coordinating with GSA will be possible, if at all. As of the writing of this study, the state of GSA collections, levels of access, and extent of operations is ambiguous. It should be noted that the team was unable to interview a GSA representative as part of this Feasibility Study.

Partnerships, Preservation, & Promotion

There are dedicated efforts in preserving and promoting New Deal art and history in New Mexico, regionally, and nationally.
As one notable example, The Living New Deal, a non-profit based in Berkeley, California, has been conducting research, mapping New Deal public works and art, and providing public education and outreach on the New Deal on a nationwide level through their website and online programs. They coordinate their efforts in collaboration with states with active programs tied to the New Deal.

One of the strongest state efforts in the nation has been based here in New Mexico through the National New Deal Preservation Association (NNDPA). A widely recognized leader, Kathryn Flynn, the NNDPA founder and former Deputy Secretary of State of New Mexico, has dedicated much of her life to identifying and inventorying New Deal art across New Mexico. Her extraordinary work and contributions have documented the extent of New Deal art and architecture through several publications. Her seminal publication, Public Art and Architecture in New Mexico 1933 – 1943: A Guide to the New Deal Legacy, is considered the go-to reference for individuals and researchers interested in understanding the presence and scope of New Deal art in New Mexico. As a result of her extensive research, New Deal art has been identified in almost every town in New Mexico, whether a mural in a post office or public building, paintings, photography, architectural features, or sculptures. The NNDPA no longer exists independently due in part to the advanced age of those who founded and participated in this important endeavor in New Mexico. The majority of information and resources from NNDPA are available through The Living New Deal organization.

Another leader in the preservation and promotion of New Deal art in New Mexico is gallupARTS. In 2025, after an eight-year process and three rounds of National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funding, it launched a virtual museum featuring Gallup's collection of New Deal artwork throughout the town in a digitized format. This work is under the purview of three different entities and housed across six locations, not all of which are publicly accessible. The Gallup New Deal Art Virtual Museum is a strong example of a project that unifies a New Deal collection, makes it widely available as an unparalleled artistic, historical, cultural, and educational resource, and uses it to promote community building. In March 2025, both gallupARTS and The Living New Deal NEH grants were terminated to "safeguard the interest of the federal government, including its fiscal priorities." [3] See Part II: Research & Reference Materials.



Close-up of Untitled by Nils Hogner

[3] Jennifer Schuessler, "Trump Administration Moves to Cut Humanities Endowment - The New York Times," The New York Times, April 3, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/03/arts/humanities-grants-canceled-doge.html.

External Environment for Museums

Significant changes are being made to federal grant programs, which are impacting the arts and culture sector on all levels (federal, state, and local). Coupled with higher construction costs in part due to COVID, ongoing shipping costs, and resource shortages, including in New Mexico, the landscape for proceeding with a new museum (of any kind) is currently challenging. It is a time to be vigilant about understanding new federal policies, proceeding with cautious fiscal management efforts, and determining what priorities can be enacted and which may need to be placed on hold.

It is a reality that "museums on average attract fewer visitors than they did five years ago, and their costs have materially increased." [4] This and other external impacts affecting museums since January 2025 include:

- Cuts to federal funding opportunities. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) have rescinded some existing grants, and future grant opportunities may be greatly reduced or eliminated for museum projects.
- In federal grants, the maximum a museum can include for indirect costs (or overhead) has been lowered from 33%-50 % down to 15% of the total grant project, resulting in the inability to a grant recipient to fully recover operating expenses, putting additional strains on a museum's general budget.
- Programs to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in federally funded programs are currently out of favor. In some cases, termination of funding is at risk for museums, universities, and other nonprofits if those efforts or programs are not eliminated altogether.
- Volatility with national and international markets, economies, tariffs, and trade restrictions is likely to trigger a rise in the cost of doing business at all levels, including capital projects.
- Ongoing cuts to the GSA, the holder and caretaker of the nation's public art collection, including New Deal art, also pose a risk to future collections or long-term loan possibilities.

[4] ReMuseum, "Report #2: Access, Scale, & Market Share," (2025), pg. 2.

Requirements to Launch a New Museum

There are several core ingredients to be able to launch a new museum successfully.

Every museum manages core realities for operating a museum such as annual fundraising in order to secure the level of revenue needed to cover expenses on an ongoing basis. Any new museum needs to have the following key characteristics:

- **Champions** who believe in the concept for a new museum, and/or individuals who has significant resources to invest in the effort and will doggedly lead the effort until successful completion while securing other donors and community support. These can be the same individual or a team of believers and funders who can make the project possible.
- **A clear and unique mission** that is relevant to its location, purpose, community, and desired impact.
- **A defined governance structure** with clear roles, responsibilities, and operations.
- **A master plan** that researches and outlines all the steps, with a timeline, to undertake a new museum with specific details such as: defined scope of operations and public activities, a projected staffing structure, capital budget for the design, construction, and build out of the building with a transition budget that onboards new staff to prepare for the opening, a projected operating budget with identified sources of revenue, a capital campaign strategy based on a feasibility study, and a committed board where each trustee contributes a significant gift toward the museum, and participates in the ongoing fundraising to secure the financial goals set forth in the capital budget.
- **A clear strategic plan** that is used to guide the work of the museum after opening the museum.
- **A market study and analysis** that captures an understanding of the communities, region, people, and cultures that it serves and the level of interest and potential for donations.
- **Fundraising and earned revenue plan** to generate the support critical to the annual operating budget informed by a fundraising feasibility study.
- **Public offerings** from exhibitions, programs, events, online access through a website, and off-site opportunities to engage communities not near the main location.
- **A marketing strategy** with implementation efforts using diverse avenues for reaching diverse publics, and gathering relevant information to inform decisions once the museum is open.
- **A collection management strategy** with standards of care and appropriate storage facilities, and preparation rooms for collections coming in for accessioning, loans for an upcoming exhibit, and conservation care when needed.

Financial Requirements & Expectations

The realities and models for operating a museum vary widely depending on their governance structure and sources of support to operate.

The majority of the United States' museums cultivate and manage diverse streams of income to cover the annual expenses of running a museum.

Nonprofit museums typically generate diverse revenue through fundraising, earned income sources, and interest from endowments. Fundraising is a diverse endeavor and typically includes annual individual contributions and trustee gifts; grants secured from foundations, corporations, and government agencies; membership programs and donor circles; and special fundraising events. Earned income is generated through admissions, program fees, and museum shop sales, for example. When an institution holds an endowment, whether a designated fund for specific purposes or for general operating, it is the interest generated from those endowments that provides income to the general operating budget in alignment with the purpose and use of each endowment.

When a museum is part of a government system (city, county, state, or federal) there is typically an annual government allocation that must be augmented by contributions and other sources of income to meet all costs of operating. It is rare that a museum is funded solely by a government entity. Further, it is not advisable for any museum to be dependent on any one primary source of income to ensure resilience in the face of one stream of income dropping significantly due to shifts in trends or the wider economy, such as a dramatic drop in tourism. Typically, at least three-to-four streams of income should be factored in, along with prudent management of expenses to operate in the black year-round.

The areas of expenditure fall into these broad, typical categories: public offerings (programs, exhibitions, events); collection care and research; administrative costs; visitor services; facilities and maintenance; and staffing/personnel. Typically, personnel expenses exceed all other categories by three-to-four times and can range from 40% - 80% of an annual operating budget depending on an institution's size. [5]

[5] Association of Art Museum Directors, "Art Museum Director Survey," (2020), pg. 17.

Capital Campaign Trends & Advice

Based on interviews with several financial experts, fundraising consultants, and museum professionals, the following advice was offered:

- In 2024, two mid-sized museums launched or completed campaigns in the $10–$50 million range in Santa Fe. Recent campaigns in the region for new and refurbished buildings include:
  - Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM – Goal: $75 million, Sq. Feet: 54,000, Campaign Length: 2022 – 2027 [6]
  - New Mexico Museum of Art Vladem Contemporary, Santa Fe, NM – Goal: $20.2 million, Sq. Feet: 35,000, Campaign Length: 2017 – 2023
  - Due to these and other capital campaigns in New Mexico, donor fatigue was mentioned in numerous interviews as a concern.
- There is no consensus on what leads to the success of capital campaigns; some are funded appropriately and are seeing greater success in their public phase (later stage) of funding and others are struggling to meet their goals.
- Community-focused museums, especially in underrepresented regions or dedicated to cultural equity, often secure strong grant and foundation support. However, with current changes in federal funding and private foundations financially tapped from COVID relief projects, private funding is seen as a significant challenge.
- Without a strong local base of support, campaigns are not expected to secure the needed regional and/or national donors.
- Eighty percent of gifts will come from 20% of donors.
- Campaigns typically bundle construction, endowment, and program funding into a single integrated goal.
- Naming rights require a significant gift reflecting a sizable portion of the total campaign. It is strongly advised not to undervalue naming rights.
- Inflation and rising construction costs continued to push capital campaign goals higher, even for modestly sized facilities. Ongoing, this concern was voiced in light of new potential cost implications due to potential tariffs.
- It is advisable to consider the implications for operating costs once the facility is open and the sustainability of those budgets. The process of assessing the correlation between eventual operating costs and the capital campaign may trigger some modifications to the capital campaign goal.

[6] “The New O’Keeffe,” The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, June 6, 2025, https://www.okeeffemuseum.org/new-museum

Mounting a New Capital Campaign

Based on previous experience and their existing projects, the fundraising professionals interviewed felt this project would need at least a $25 million goal. A sample capital campaign budget breakdown in that range included:

Sample Capital Campaign Budget Breakdown — $25 Million Goal

Construction & Renovation (60–70%) / Estimated Cost: $15–17.5 million

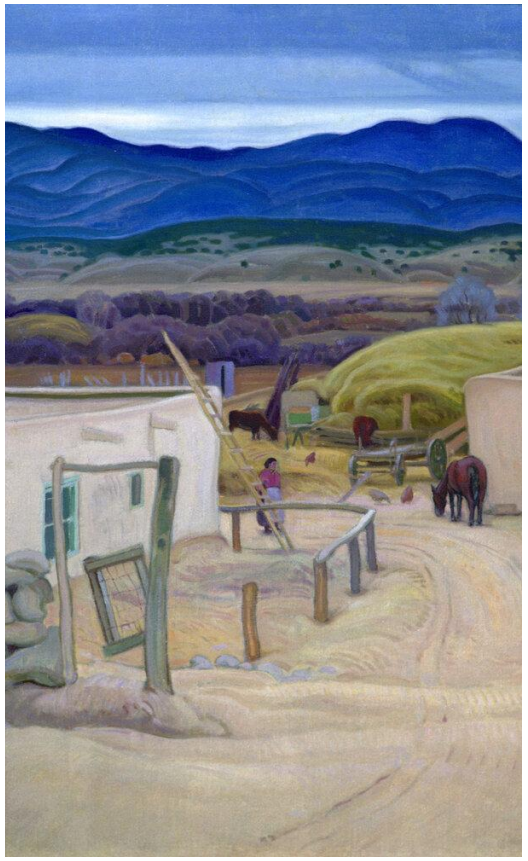
- Hard construction costs (construction, materials, labor, site preparation).
- Soft construction costs (designing, architectural and engineering fees, permitting, legal, development costs).
- Contingency (~10% - 30% of construction budget).

Exhibits & Interiors (10–15%) / Estimated Cost: $2.5–3.75 million

- Exhibit design and fabrication.
- Multimedia and interactive installations.
- Furniture, fixtures, and museum-specific equipment

Campaign Expenses (7–12%) / Estimated Cost: $1.75–3 million

- Feasibility study and fundraising counsel.
- Marketing, branding, and donor materials.
- Staff salaries (campaign manager, development staff).
- Events, travel, software (CRM systems).



Close-up of "Across the Valley" by Martin Henning

Endowment & Operating Reserves (10–15%) / Estimated Cost: $2.5–3.75 million

- Endowment to support ongoing operations noted that only a portion of the interest generated from the corpus each year can be used to support the general operating budget, while the principal/corpus of the endowment remains untouched and invested.
- Reserve fund for maintenance, staffing, and programming.
- Typically, 5% of the interest generated through the endowment is used towards operations or project/program-specific activities.

Pre-Opening Programming & Launch (2–5%) / Estimated Cost: $500,000–1.25 million

- Educational and community outreach.
- Opening events and exhibitions.
- Staff training and onboarding.

Costs can vary significantly based on:

- Geographic location.
- Architectural and exhibit design complexity.
- Length of the campaign.
- Level of in-house fundraising capacity versus reliance on consultants.

Lead Donors and Champions

New museums require a significant funder or financial champion. A financial champion typically makes the lead gift in the millions to jump-start the effort, demonstrating financial support for the idea or institution. Further, it is this champion who tends to be the driving force behind keeping the project moving forward through to completion, and the spokesperson who brings significant credibility to the project. In other words, donors, politicians, and community leaders believe this individual will have the (financial) leadership to turn the dream into reality. Without an identified financial champion, any project or museum is not likely to get off the ground. As previously noted, individuals with passion for the project can also be key to the success of a project, however they need a financial partner.

Funding Strategy & Timeline

In a capital campaign for a museum project, fundraisers typically use a donor pyramid to chart the number and size of gifts required to reach campaign goals. In a $25 million campaign, the top of the pyramid is your seed gift of one significant contribution at $10 million, supported by mid-level gifts from at least 15 donors contributing $250,000 each.

Because a project like this would be the establishment of a new museum, NNDAM is starting donor relationships from scratch, which will take longer than with an existing organization with a long history of financial supporters. Likely, a capital campaign will take a minimum of 5 years, and all campaigns generally are broken into six phases:

Silent Phase

- Phase 1: Project + Business Campaign Advancement
- Phase 2: Funding Feasibility Study + Scope Assessment
- Phase 3: Board Gifts
- Phase 4: Lead + Major Gifts

Public Phase

- Phase 5: Community Campaign + Construction
- Phase 6: Dedication + Celebration

For a detail of phase lengths, milestones achieved and activities, see the Capital Campaign Sample Timeline in Part II: Research & Reference Materials.



"Old Hunter" by Emil Bisttram

Master Planning

To properly understand the scope of undertaking the development of a new museum, its viability, and costs, a thorough master plan must be undertaken that lays out the steps to implement and create this new entity. (See chart in Research & Reference Materials).

A master plan includes four interacting elements:

- **External Assessment** including Market analysis, Feasibility Study (this document), an Advancement Plan for fundraising, and a Capital Campaign Strategy.

- **Organizational Development**, including Institutional identity with brand, mission, vision, and values; a governance leadership plan; an organizational plan focused on staffing needs and timeline for hiring and scope of responsibilities for all positions; a digital strategy for operations; a business plan; and a facilities plan to define museum operations.

- **Building + Site** including the architectural program; building design; construction documents and timeline; Furniture and build-out specifics; landscape; parking, etc.

- **Museum + Visitor Experience** (A content and interpretive plan; Visitor experience plan; Exhibition development and design; Audience development plan; Digital strategy for the visitor experience.

Master planning is typically undertaken by a team of diverse experts who work together to interrelate the full range of questions and specifics for a new project. It is the interaction of all these core elements that yields the reality and approach that uniquely fits the particular museum, given its location, focus, funding capacity, and leadership.

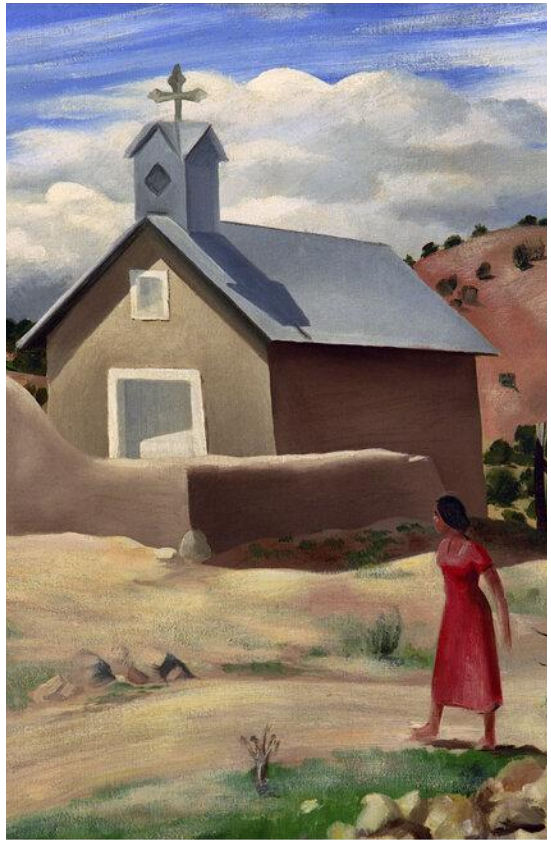
Should the concept of renovating an existing building emerge at some point in the future, historic preservationists, and structural engineers are also required to be addressed in a master plan.

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure defines the right governance model, the corresponding financial needs, mission, the right-sized staff with the expertise to implement the range of operations necessary to serve the public and fulfill the unique expectations of a museum.

Museums are typically nonprofit, meaning that the revenue generated is for the sole purpose of advancing the mission and operations of a museum. Those museums that are a part of a government agency, such as the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, typically receive government support for operations, which is then augmented by private support. These models are typically referred to as public-private partnerships. In the case of DCA, there are several private partnerships, one with the Museum of New Mexico Foundation (MNMF), plus five additional separate foundations linked to specific museums and historic sites, and seven separate Friends Groups, also linked to specific museums or sites. The complexities of these public/private partnerships require astute planning and coordination with the directors of the specific museums and historic sites for fundraising efforts to support exhibitions, programs, and special events.

The staffing structure is defined by the scope of public offerings and ongoing operations. There is not a set formula, but the diverse skill set to operate a museum will likely cover general administration and finance/fundraising, public programming and exhibition managers or coordinators, collection managers, visitor serving staff, facility maintenance, marketing specialists, etc. Depending on the budget and scope of operations, the staff includes full-time and part-time. If, for example, the staff is small, say just 2-4 people, each staff member will have multiple responsibilities.



Close up of "Church in the Rio Grande Valley" by Paul Lantz

Visitor Experiences & Audience Potential

At the core of determining what a museum does in service to the public is an inspiring and relevant mission, vision for the future, and values that inform the difference a museum is aiming to achieve.

Strategies to attract and engage visitors and audiences with museums have evolved in numerous ways over the years. To be able to attract visitors to a museum and sustain attendance and participation, the content of public offerings is expected to be dynamic, engaging, inclusive, and interactive. Timely and relevant topics are key to engaging visitors who have many choices of where to spend their leisure time. Another significant effort over the past couple of decades is the commitment to broaden and reflect diversity through the content of exhibits, co-creation of exhibits working with representatives from communities, expanding the stories told, addressing the imbalances in collections, and building enduring relationships with communities, to name a few strategies.

Many institutions incorporate diverse methods for engaging audiences, from the use of videos, interactive computer stations, inventive use of sound, music, and sensory elements to bring to life the content and focus of exhibitions, programs, and events. Further, online access to a museum is expected with a visually engaging and easy-to-navigate website with features that allow visitors to see upcoming activities and exhibitions, view collections, watch a video tour of an exhibition, and access research connected to the holdings of the museum's collections.

While the topic of the New Deal and New Deal art is a significant part of the American story, for many, particularly younger generations, the New Deal is unknown, while for older audiences, it remains a period of art and history that has enduring value and importance. If at some point in the future, a museum focusing on New Deal art is envisioned and more feasible, an in-depth audience survey will be critical to gauge the interest in New Deal art (and the New Deal in general), and to gain insights as to what will engage visitors and draw them to visit a museum based on this distinct period of time.

BENCHMARKING & OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

Benchmarking

This benchmark comparison assesses the core factors for the development and operations of successful institutions, illustrating the range of business models currently operating in the cultural sector. The comparison includes location, operational structure, total expenses/operating budget, cost per visitor, staffing size, annual attendance, number of objects in the collection, membership numbers, and facility size that make the organizations function day-to-day.

The review also provides an overview of the larger cultural landscape and economic conditions in which a new museum would operate and compete for economic resources and visitor numbers. An original list of over 424 museums, centers, arts organizations, and historic sites was compiled by the consultants for potential institutions to study. Basic operational information was collected through public records, a museum directory database, annual reports, interviews, and information requests with previous or current staff. Since there were no exact matches for peer institutions, the team developed four categories that touched on a specific aspect of the feasibility of NNDAM:

- **New Mexico Art Exhibiting Organizations –** Thirteen organizations were selected because they exhibit art within New Mexico with a range of operational structures (government, academic, nonprofit, or a hybrid), budgets, programs, and services, and collecting and non-collecting. The list illustrates the range and depth of operational realities and possibilities within the state.
- **Regional Art Museums –** This list of seven institutions focuses specifically on mid-sized art museums in the Southwest regional market with an operating budget between $500,000 and $1.6 million. This budget range ensures that paid professional museum staff conduct core museum functions (administration, public engagement, exhibitions, collections). The population of the locations range from 80,000 to 717,000, demonstrating operations in a variety of business environments.
- **National Museums –** There are over 250 museums or centers with the title national, United States, or America/n in their name. The list was pared down by excluding organizations in Washington D.C., or New York City, or within the Smithsonian, National Historic Sites or Park Museums systems, due to their federal funding model. The list was further divided into visitation between 10,000 and 50,000 and above 50,000. The team felt these visitation numbers were necessary to sustain successful operations.
- **New Deal-era Content –** The smallest section features institutions that educate and interpret New Deal-era content, including the proposed focus area of New Deal art, which consists of three organizations.

Museum Size

Among the various professional museum associations and their research, there is no agreed-upon definition of museum size. For instance, the Association of Academic Museums & Galleries (AAMG) states that a mid-sized museum operates between $250,000 and $1M, however, the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) identifies small museums as having less than $2.5 million operating budgets in their annual staff salary surveys. Regardless, these organizations categorize museum size based primarily on operating budget. To add to this, the metro size influences the scope of museum sizes. Therefore, for this study, mid-sized museums are defined as those with an operating budget between $500,000 - $1.5M.

Limitations

It should be remembered that this chart is a quick snapshot, and for obvious reasons, does not reveal all the nuances at play for each of the institutions featured. Non-profit museums are required to file tax Form 990, breaking out revenue (contributed and grants, earned and investment) and expenses (salaries, grants, member benefits, fundraising fees, and other). However, academic and government-funded museums are not required to make their expenses and revenue public. For example, with an entity such as the University of New Mexico Art Museum, some core expenses are absorbed by the University's budget, and thus, a full budgetary snapshot can only be deduced from the resources. At the time, 2022 was the most recent completed tax year filing for the fiscal comparison.



"Cerro Gordo Before the Sangre de Cristo Mountains"
By William Penhallow Henderson

Benchmarking Chart

Comparative Review									
Institution	Operational Structure	BUDGET		MUSEUM STATS					Notes (partnerships, status, additional details)
		2022 Total Expenses	Cost Per Visitor	Staff	Annual Attendance	Membership	Objects in Collection	Square Footage	
New Mexico Arts Exhibiting Organizations									
Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM	Non-profit	$9.1M	$52.63	49 FT / 27 PT	172,877	2,000	3,000	7,000 sf	New building construction 2023 to 2025, 54,000 sf
SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM	Non-profit	$4.1M	$164.00	13 FT / 12 PT	25,000	N/A	65,000	15,000 sf	
New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM	State	$4M*	$61.53	40 FT / 1 PT	65,000	N/A	20,000	82,056 sf	*Includes State, Friends of Contemporary Art and Photography + MNM Foundation funding Facilities: Plaza Building (47,053 sf) Hewett House, & Vladm Contemporary (35,003 sf, opened 2023 - 20.2M capital campaign)
Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, NM	State	$3.8M*	$37.21	23 FTE / 1 PT	103,496	8,200	130,000	87,000 sf	*Includes State, IFA Foundation + MNM Foundation funding
University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, NM	Academic	$1.5 M (FY 22/23)	$33.80	8 FT / 7 PT	44,374	None	30,000	N/A	
Roswell Museum, Roswell, NM	City + Non-profit	$1.2M (FY 22/23)	$32.18	12 FT / 4 PT	37,281	N/A	11,000	51,000 sf	Currently closed due to flood damage
The Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, Santa Fe, NM	Non-profit	$1.1 M	$33.33	7 FT / 8 PT	33,000	N/A	11,000	23,500 sf	8,200 sf (1994) + 6,500 sf collection & research (1999) + 8,800 sf studio/galleries (2014)
Santa Fe Arts Institute, Santa Fe, NM	Non-profit	$831,272	N/A	4 FT / 2 PT	60 - 70 residence	N/A	Non-collecting	17,000 sf	Artist-in-residence program
Millicent Rogers Museum, Taos, NM	Non-profit	$778,743	$38.93	7 FT / 2 PT	20,000	500	7,000	15,000 sf	
516 ARTS, Albuquerque, NM	Non-profit	$723,501	$72.35	5 FT	10,000	85 -100	Non-collecting	5,500* sf	*gallery space, non-collecting contemporary art museum
University Art Museum, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM	Academic	$639,107	$120.79	5 FT / 11 PT	5,291	None	2,000	10,000 sf	
Taos Center for the Arts, Taos, NM	Non-profit	$523,158	$38.75	3 FT / 5 PT	13,500	405	Non-collecting	9,812 sf	
GallupARTS, Gallup, NM	Non-profit	$194,250	$12.95	0 FT / 4 PT	15,000	50	Non-collecting	1,500 sf	Artist-in-residence program, operating the Virtual New Deal Art Museum 2025 NEH Grant resinded
Regional Art Museums		**2022 / 2023**							
Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO	Non-profit	$1.6 M	$6.90	6 FT / 6 FT	231,000	207	Non-collecting	10,000 sf	17,500 sf new building 2030, non-collecting, 23 exhibitions annually
Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Arts, Denver, CO	Non-profit	$1.4 M	$97.04	9 FT / 5 PT	14,426	N/A	30,000	38,500 sf	New building opened 2018, merging with Denver Art Museum in 2025, was a private foundation
Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, SLC, UT	Non-profit	$1.4 M	$25.41	7 FT / 5 PT	55,080	N/A	Non-collecting	36,000 sf	18 exhibitions annually, 2019 sold "substantial portion" of collection to pay off debt
Loveland Museum, Loveland, CO	City	$1.3 M	$36.39	7 FT / 3 PT	35,719	825	30,000	N/A	City Funded, 117,000 Private foundation. 19 exhibitions per year
DeGrazia Gallery in the Sun, Tucson, AZ	Non-profit	$1 M	$20.00	10 FT / 2 PT	50,000	N/A	15,000	N/A	Art gallery, building NRHP, private foundation, 16,000 sf galleries
Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, University of Texas, El Paso, TX	Academic	$830,000	$87.36	6 FT / 9PT	9,500	None	4,000	14,700 sf	
Eccles Community Arts Center, Ogden, UT	Non-profit	$513,269	$17.10	3 FT / 2 PT	30,000	N/A	Non-collecting	N/A	Visual & performing Art center, historic home
National Museums									
National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, IL	Non-profit	$7.6M	$45.23	N/A	168,000	N/A	22,000	48,000 sf	
National Nordic Museum, Seattle, WA	Non-profit	$6.5M	$39.70	N/A	165,000	N/A	80,000	57,000 sf	Act of Congress National designation
National Music Museum, Vermillion, SD	Non-profit	$2.8M	$112.00	12 FT / 1 PT	25,000	N/A	15,000	39,000+ sf	Located on the campus of University of South Dakota, non-profit in partnership with USD
New Deal Era Content									
Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY	Federal	N/A	N/A	21 FT / 7 PT	150,000	250	34,000	12,000* sf	*just exhibition space 2016 operating budget: $5.8M Membership numbers continue to be less than pre-COVID
New Deal Museum, Mount Morris, NY	Non-profit	$590,702	$295.35	5 FT / 3PT	2,000	195	233	10100 sf	Opened 2025, operated by Genesee Valley Council on the Arts, does not own building or collection (on loan from GSA).Collection focuses on New Deal era NY artists and life. Number represent the combination of GVCA and New Deal Museum operations.
Living New Deal, Berkeley, CA	Non-profit	$218,607	N/A	0 FT / 12 PT	1,400*	None	Non-collecting	Remote offices	Program attendance: 1,000 online, 400 in person Mailing list: 4,200 2025 NEH Grant rescinded

Operational Analysis

New Mexico Art Exhibiting Organizations

The institutions featured have budgets around $194,000 into the millions per annum.

- There is not necessarily a correlation between the size of the budget to annual visitation, or between those two measures and square footage.
- There is a correlation between the operating budget and staff size. For mid-size museums in this list, their full-time staff range from 3 to 12, increasing with budget size. However, that is not necessarily the case for part-time staff numbers.
- The expenses the institutions spend per visitor vary widely between $12.95 - $164 per person. The median cost per visitor (dividing the operating budget by visits) is $38.84; the majority operated in the range of $32.18 - $38.93.
    - New Mexico arts institutions listed above spend a median of $38.84 which is less than half of the national median cost of $82 per visitor in art museums. [7]
- Also of note is that art museums under a $5M operating budget only earn an average of $2 per visitor in earned admissions, retail, and food verses the $38.84 median cost per visitor, necessitating diversified revenue streams to ensure the investment fully supports public engagement and service. [8]

Regional Art Museums

The selection of mid-sized art museums focuses mostly on regional or national contemporary art, which tends to rely heavily on grants, memberships, and local philanthropy, but can be more agile and community-focused than large institutions.

- Interviewees referenced trends of small-to-mid-size regional art museums and centers exploring consolidation of operations with other institutions, particularly in response to financial pressures, changes in donor giving, shifting visitor expectations, and the need for greater efficiency and impact. Mergers can offer economies of scale, shared administrative functions, a stronger financial footing, and/or one museum becomes a curatorial division of the other institution, as in Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Arts (listed in the chart) becoming the Kirkland Institute at the Denver Art Museum in 2025.
- Collection numbers in this budget range from no collections to 30,000 items and tend to be proportional: the larger the collection, the larger the budget.

[7] ReMuseum, “Report #2: Access, Scale, & Market Share,” (2025), pg. 7.
[8] Association of Art Museum Directors, “Art Museums by the Numbers,” (2018), pg. 9.

National Museums

The content of national museums ranges widely from cultural heritage to historic places/events from industry-specific to social movements. This select list represents a small cross-section of national museums, two of which focus on various art styles and range from urban to rural locations. The full list of national museums considered for this research is in Part II: Research & Reference Materials.

- Very few "national" museums operate in the $500,000 to $1M budget range. This demonstrates that a museum representing a national story of some type commands a larger operation and higher visitation.

- While any institution can call itself “national,” some nonprofits, like the National Nordic Museum, have secured the use of “national” through congressional designation. As noted previously, no federal funding was attached to receiving approval to use “national” in the title of their museum.

New Deal-Era Content

No New Deal “art” museums were identified, however there are a few institutions that promote, research, and interpret the history and legacy of the New Deal, though New Deal-era art or a few New Deal art pieces. In these cases, New Deal art is only one aspect of their content and offerings. This list provides various approaches for scale and scope.

- Some examples include those mostly funded directly through federal appropriations (FDR Library) or indirect government funding like the National Endowment for the Humanities (The Living New Deal) and the New York Council for the Arts (New Deal Museum, not yet in existence)

- Not enough institutions with New Deal content exist to formulate significant findings for operations.

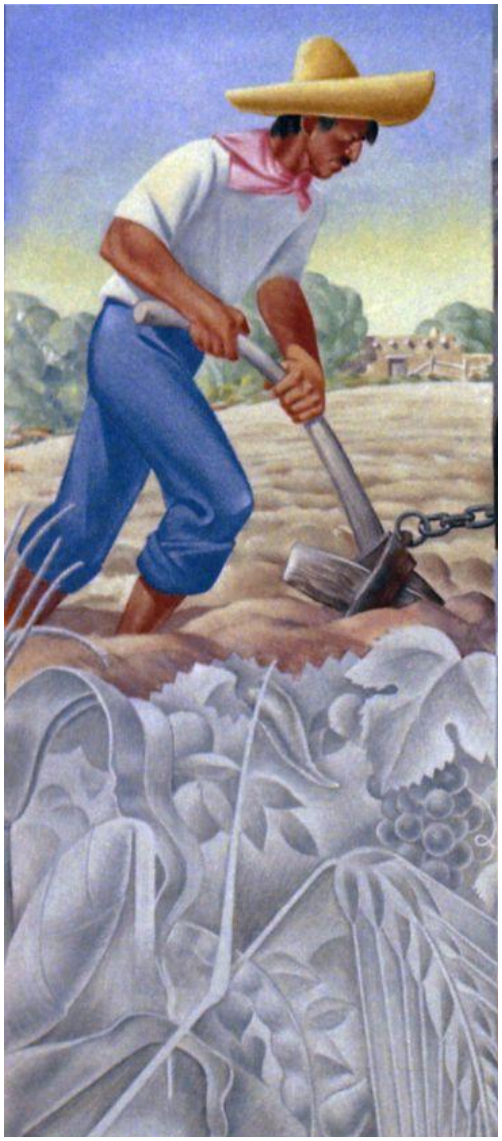
MARKET & AUDIENCE ASSESSMENT

The efforts of the team to define the market and audiences were achieved through a review of the cultural and arts landscape and analysis of visitation to other institutions in New Mexico. Due to the scope of this Feasibility Study, conducting a market study was not possible. Market studies are typically done in tandem with the development of a master plan with marketing experts. As stated before, undertaking a thorough market study is essential to gauge the feasibility and interest of launching a museum dedicated to New Deal art in New Mexico.

New Mexico's Cultural and Arts Landscape

New Mexico is rich in cultural attractions and artistic expression that reflect the region's diverse and vibrant histories and heritage. With over 200 museums, parks, monuments, and historical and cultural institutions, it ranks among the top states nationally for museums per capita. The greatest concentration of arts organizations is in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, followed by Las Cruces and Taos, with many smaller museums and arts organizations located across the state, from Gallup to Clovis. A rich backdrop of art galleries expands the arts economy in New Mexico.
For example, there are 300+ art galleries in Santa Fe alone.

These vital arts and cultural institutions strengthen the state's cultural fabric, economy, and society. In 2022, New Mexico's nonprofit arts and culture industry, including museums, generated $740.9 million in economic activity. [9] Within this industry, the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is one of the largest and most diverse state cultural agencies in the United States, operating eight museums, eight historic sites, and separate divisions dedicated to arts, archaeology, historic preservation, and the State Library. Nearly one million people visit DCA museums annually, including thousands of New Mexico school children. [10] While state allocations are made annually to DCA to support the operations of museums and other cultural institutions, DCA works with the MNMF, multiple other foundations, and Friends Groups to coordinate fundraising critical to the full operation of these many cultural organizations.



Close-up of "Mesilla" by Tom Lea

[9] "Releases." New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. Accessed June 10, 2025. https://www.newmexicoculture.org/release/1616/39.
[10] "About." New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. Accessed June 10, 2025. https://www.newmexicoculture.org/about/.

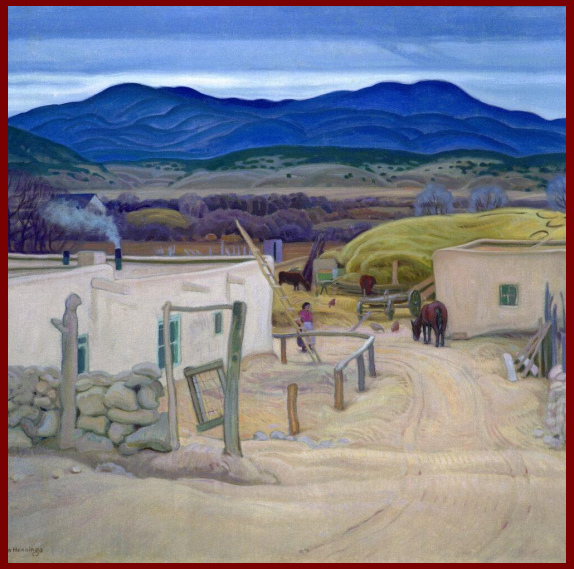
It should be noted that the Creative Industries Division of the State of New Mexico was enacted in 2023 by the New Mexico Legislature and is a key factor in envisioning the potential of the state and its unique resources.

> ***The Mission of the Creative Industries Division:*** The Creative Industries Division works to foster New Mexico's creative economy by supporting entrepreneurs, small businesses, and organizations in New Mexico's creative industries. Through economic development efforts that span education, workforce development, public infrastructure, grant-making, and resource sharing, we work to support our innovative ecosystem of creative businesses, professionals, technologists, and more.
>
> ***The Vision:*** To establish New Mexico as a place where creative industries create economic opportunities for creative New Mexicans to thrive and become an economic driver of the state's economy. [11]

The immensity of New Mexico's cultural landscape is both an asset and a challenge. Currently, federal funding to agencies that traditionally support arts, cultural, and museum programs is being reduced or eliminated. The changes in federal economic priorities at this time is placing a greater impact on state and private sources for the operation, preservation, and promotion of cultural resources. (See discussion later in this section about the External Environment for Museums)

Introducing a new free-standing museum into this diverse landscape was considered unadvisable by most interviewees, noting the uncertain and volatile economic climate under the federal government, coupled with the drastic cutting of supporting agencies already underway. Further, many small museums in New Mexico struggle to raise the necessary funds to operate, as shared in an interview with New Mexico Association of Museums President, Greta Brunschwyler.

[11] "Releases." New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. Accessed June 10, 2025. https://www.newmexicoculture.org/release/1616/39.







04 Potential Models & SWOT Analysis

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

POTENTIAL MODELS

Seven potential project models, or frameworks, for how a project like the National New Deal Art Museum could exist, were developed through a combination of research findings and insights gathered from interviewees. Starting with the initial premise of having a “national” New Deal Art Museum, as identified in the RFP, in New Mexico proved challenging, as discussed earlier. This led to the discussion of whether a National New Deal Art Museum could get started and succeed anywhere in the United States. Ultimately, because of the challenges of starting a museum in general, and in New Mexico in particular, five additional models were developed as options for possible consideration. In all cases, the models were developed and meant to be interpreted from the point of view of an objective, big-picture perspective, or the 30,000-foot view.

The seven models include:

- National New Deal Art Museum, New Mexico
- National New Deal Art Museum, USA
- Hybrid Art/History Incubator Museum
- Art Center
- Museum Wing
- University Department
- Museum Network and Virtual Museum

The models were evaluated in a matrix, against seven characteristics as listed below:

- **Project model type.** Name or qualifier the team used to best describe the framework. The seven models identified are as follows:
- **Project model description.** Brief description of potential project strategy/focus.
- **Potential collection sources.** Where might collections be sourced or developed?
- **Potential scope of offerings.** What the model could ‘offer’ as a means of education, interest, or programming for potential visitors.
- **Potential location.** High-level look, this model type might be located.
- **Advantages.** Select high-level ideas of what could make this model inherently ideal or logical.
- **Challenges.** Select high-level ideas of inherent challenges that could make this model ineffective.

The team then conducted a SWOT analysis to further assess potential models’ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and challenges are generally viewed as internal to an organization or institution, while opportunities and threats are viewed as external and may or may not be in the control of the organization or institution.

PROJECT MODEL TYPE	PROJECT MODEL DESCRIPTION	COLLECTION SOURCE	SCOPE OF OFFERINGS	POTENTIAL LOCATION	ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
National New Deal Art Museum, New Mexico (RFP concept)	A full-function museum with collections, education, and development departments. Focus on New Deal art by NM artisans. Due to governmental funding challenges, operates as an independent nonprofit	Items on short and long-term loan from GSA and existing museums. Could include New Deal 'ERA' art?	Art Exhibits Partner with existing New Mexico art programs Public & Ed Programming Research Library	TBD	Any institution can be named "national." Using "national" in the title may increase recognition and funding capacity.	- Federal-funded national museums are Smithsonian institutions which are only located in DC and NYC - New Mexico is not a logical location for a National New Deal Art Museum - No DCA/State funding at this time - Potential access to GSA collections unknown due to current federal administration - Needs a champion
National New Deal Art Museum, USA (RFP concept)	Same as above but located in Washington DC	Items on short and long-term loan from GSA and existing museums.	Art Exhibits Public & Ed Programming Research Library	Washington, DC	DC is a logical location for a national museum	- Federal-funded national museums are Smithsonian institutions, National Parks, and Presidential Library/Museums which take decades to establish. - No Federal funding or interest at this time - Potential access to GSA collections unknown - Needs a champion
Hybrid Art/History Incubator Museum (Potential Project Model)	A full-functioning museum coupled with an art center for supporting and training local artists.	Items on short and long-term loan from GSA and existing museums.	Art Training Center Artists in Residence Art & History Exhibits Public & Ed Programming Research Library	TBD	Embody the spirit and intentions of the New Deal Tie into the NM Creative Economy	- Numerous artists-in-resident and arts programs operating in NM. - Potential access to GSA collections unknown due to current federal administration - Needs a champion

PROJECT MODEL TYPE	PROJECT MODEL DESCRIPTION	COLLECTION SOURCE	SCOPE OF OFFERINGS	POTENTIAL LOCATION	ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
Art Center	A gallery or collection of gallery spaces featuring temporary shows of New Deal art. Staff and operations limited to staging exhibits with minimal programming.	Items on short and long-term loan from GSA and existing museums	Art Exhibits	TBD	Smaller facility due to limited storage requirements	- Needs to meet GSA requirements. gallupARTS has launched something similar. - Potential access to GSA collections unknown due to current federal administration
Museum Wing	A new wing of an existing art museum devoted to New Deal Art with a dedicated curator.	Items on short and long-term loan from GSA and existing museums.	Art Exhibits	Existing museum in New Mexico	Lower overhead to operate and maintain an entire facility. Access to existing New Deal art collections and museum professionals / content experts	- No DCA/State funding at this time - Limited or no access to GSA collections
University Department	An extension of a University art history and research department with public access to collections.	Items on short and long-term loan from GSA and existing museums.	Art Exhibits Research Center	University of New Mexico Or New Mexico State University	Lower overhead to operate and maintain an entire facility.	- Limited or no access to GSA collections
Museum Network and Virtual Museum	An online organization that supplies and maintains New Deal interpretive nodes installed in existing local facilities, where New Deal art is located. Supplanted by a website with a rich set of virtual offerings and links to existing museums. Coupled with a traveling exhibition component featuring art from the GSA storage.	Where New Deal art is currently located in existing museums and public buildings around the country.	Interpretive Kiosks Virtual Art Exhibits Online Programs Traveling Exhibition Online Research Center	Not Applicable	Not dependent on GSA collections Partner with traveling exhibition organizations like Exhibit Envoy or ExhibitsUSA	- Operationally traveling exhibitions are not self-sufficient. Need ongoing financial support. - gallupARTS & Living New Deal doing similar activities.

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

Internal Strengths

- New Deal art can be found across New Mexico, where it is a recognizable and meaningful part of the community fabric.
- New Deal art programs stressed the importance of making art more accessible to a broader range of the public, displaying American-made art that depicted American subject matter, and creating inclusive opportunities for artists from diverse communities. This is highly relevant for today's communities.
- The potential relative to this study is to consider a place where the community comes together in support of the arts as cultural enrichment (relative to paintings, murals, photographs, posters, architecture, objects), a source of employment, a potential economic generator, and a space where youth can experiment and create art.
- There is potential to leverage the spirit of the New Deal by including an art incubator into the project that would be a direct benefit to the community.
- The variety of New Deal art in New Mexico represent a rich spectrum of visual, industrial, and architectural forms that has the potential to spark appeal and interest.

External Opportunities

- If significant support from elected officials could be secured, this could provide support, initial credibility, and validation that could generate more investment through private contributions.
- If a statewide coalition of support and interest could be launched using a range of art media and different areas of special interest, greater participation and recognition of New Deal art is likely to grow.
- The New Mexico Tourism Department could be an ideal partner for directing visitors to view New Deal art in fixed locations across the state (similar to the Historic Women Market Initiative), thus expanding the richness of NM communities.
- Identifying and joining an existing-but-complementary institution in New Mexico willing to expand its mission and collection holdings to tap into the storytelling potential of New Deal art. The New Mexico Museum of Art, the New Mexico History Museum, and the Museum of International Folk Art each have New Deal art in their collections.

- The potential of housing the museum in a New Deal building is an attractive option and was mentioned multiple times during interviews. This idea, or using an underutilized structure, could encourage other economic opportunities. This would require the building to be available, suitable for the intended use, and located in an area that meets other criteria.

- There is a significant amount of New Deal art across the State of New Mexico, providing opportunities for small communities to capitalize on attracting visitors to explore and see New Deal art in situ.

- A distant possibility relates to current efforts to downsize GSA and potentially release the responsibility of the care of New Deal art to others. This may create an opportunity for other institutions to step in to care for and display GSA collections. As of the writing of this study there remain many unknowns regarding working with GSA but new developments in the future could reveal new opportunities.



"Cowboy on Horseback" by Schleeter Howard

CHALLENGES & RISKS

Internal Challenges

- Identifying a visionary to champion the project, secure seed funders, and dedicate the time to take the concept from idea to implementation is essential. As noted earlier, this could be two individuals who together bring passion and financial capacity to the project.
- Defining the compelling “hook” and value proposition to correctly position the institution in the marketplace and secure public interest and funding.
- The notion of achieving the title of a “national” New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico is viewed as improbable given the national scope of the New Deal.
- The aspiration to secure federal funding is considered highly unlikely in the current political and economic environment. It remains to be seen if the loss of federal funding will in turn impact state funding.

External Risks

- The choices for determining a successful location for a New Deal Art Museum within the state of New Mexico that fulfills the necessary criteria outlined in this document did not emerge.
- The financial prospects for this project raised significant concerns:
  - The current financial climate for non-profits, arts organizations, and museums is tenuous, given the actions and elimination of agencies and funding opportunities by the federal administration. Federal funding or support is unlikely.
  - Project champions with significant capacity to undertake the initial funding and leadership for the project, as well as those with the enthusiasm and passion to move a project such as NNDAM forward were not identified. Further, individuals, private donors, or organizations that could provide funding for this project did not emerge.
  - Fundraising in New Mexico is challenging with so many museums already in existence and a limited pool of donors, exacerbated by donor fatigue.
  - DCA would be unable to take on another museum at this time without significant additional state funding to support both the building and ongoing operational costs.
  - Duplication or overlap of efforts and programming such as efforts at gallupARTS and other artist-in-residence programs in New Mexico, as well as a duplication of mission with the New Mexico Museum of Art and the New Mexico History Museum are potentially occurring. These examples may present an opportunity in the long term.

- Duplication or overlap of efforts and programming such as efforts at gallupARTS and other artist-in-residence programs in New Mexico, as well as a duplication of mission with the New Mexico Museum of Art and the New Mexico History Museum are potentially occurring. These examples may present an opportunity in the long term.

- Complications around the current disposition and accessibility of New Deal collections are complex due to the reality that collections are spread across the country and in GSA storage facilities. The prospect of acquiring a permanent collection for display in a new museum is problematic for a variety of reasons, including.
  - The nature of federal ownership of all New Deal portable art means that exhibiting any New Deal art is dependent on loans (short-term or long-term).
  - The GSA, which holds significant collections, has a loan policy, and have loaned collections in the past. As the team was not able to confirm the current status of operations with GSA, further exploration will be needed if any collaboration or loan of objects is to be pursued in the future.
  - New Deal art is held in hundreds of museums and public buildings in the United States.

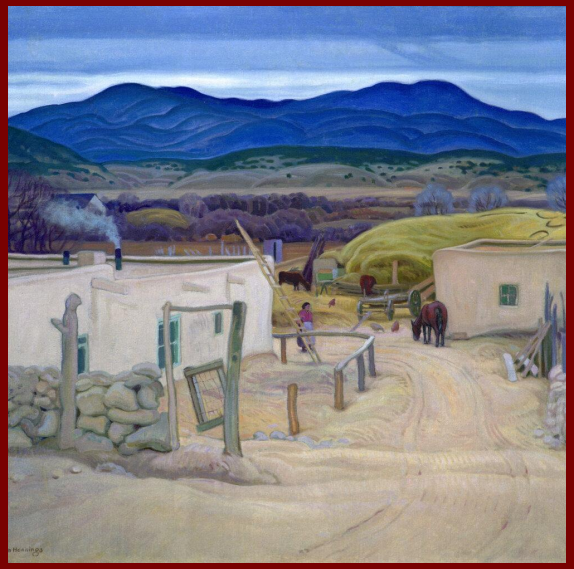
- There is no consensus at this time on a location for a museum in New Mexico. There were mixed responses from interviewees, with some voicing deep concern about finding a site that could generate critical numbers for visitor traffic year-round being possible. While others suggested placing it in a more rural location, particularly if in a New Deal structure, the ability of such a location to engender the traffic, financial support, and ongoing operations was deemed difficult at best.

- The challenges of navigating the New Deal is a controversial topic, due to the shifting political environment.

- The Smithsonian is not a viable option to sponsor the project, as there is already a queue of proposed “national” projects seeking to become part of the system.

- While “national” can be added to the name of a museum, to formally have the “national” designation requires soliciting the US Department of the Interior. This moniker is only given to institutions that already have existed for a number of years and have a track record of attracting visitors and sustaining operations.

Weighing out the balance of pros and cons for a National New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico yields the result that moving ahead at this time is not advisable. It is recommended to step back and explore alternatives that are likely more sustainable, realistic, and to build more interest in the concept of a museum about New Deal art in New Mexico. These are discussed in the Recommendations section.



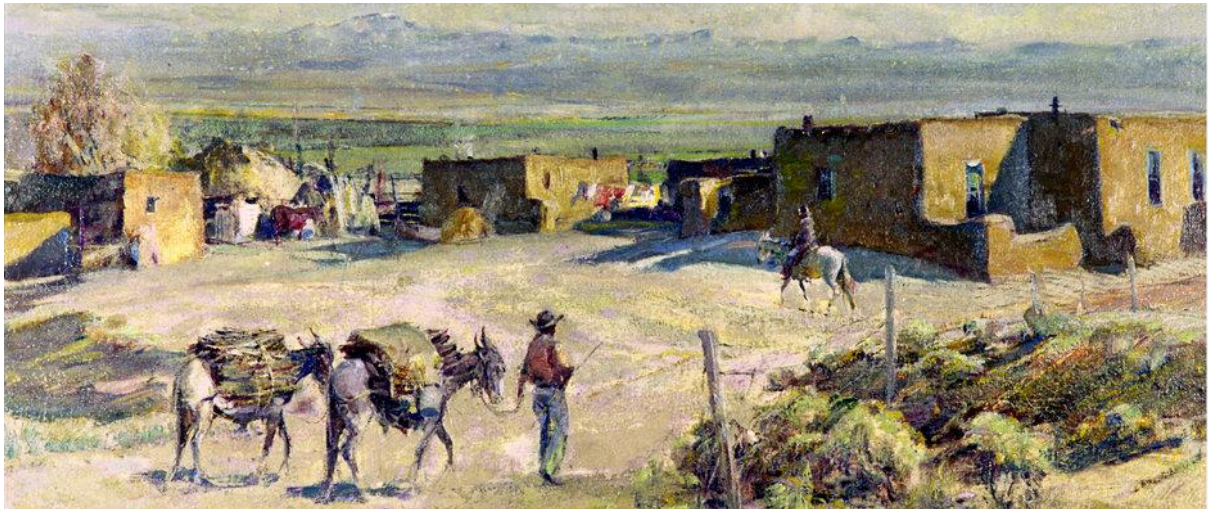




05 Site & Building

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

SITE LOCATION



"Taos Scene" by Oscar Beringhaus

As has been discussed elsewhere in this study, a proposed museum is dependent on many factors, including a champion or visionary, a location that is tied to the vision of the museum, and multiple options and resources for funding (and staffing). Knowing that these have not yet been identified, the following four options for a potential location of the NNDAM in New Mexico are offered: Albuquerque (Bernalillo County), Las Cruces (Dona Ana County), Santa Fe (Santa Fe County), and Gallup (McKinley County).

During the SWOT analysis, other locations were evaluated, including Silver City (Grant County), Alamogordo (Otero County), and Taos (Taos County). While New Deal Programs influenced all three locations, whether through structures, art programs, or the impact of the Civilian Conservation Corps, all were eliminated due to low ratings on the criteria used. All three are well-known tourist destinations, with Taos getting the most arts visitor traffic of the three, however, they are seen as more remote and difficult to access for potential tourists, whether by car or plane. While the team was unable to visit gallupARTS physically, the Gallup New Deal Art digital program was reviewed multiple times. In addition, Woven Architecture has completed many projects throughout the state, including historic and museum projects, and is familiar with the challenges and opportunities of the locations being proposed.

More in-depth criteria used to evaluate the four best options include the following:

- **Identity:**
  - How could an NNDAM reflect or enhance the area?
  - Are there other New Deal attractions nearby?
  - Could an existing New Deal building or structure be utilized?

- **Community:**
  - How would an NNDAM interact with the existing community?
  - Is there an adequate population to support it?
  - What other existing cultural interests or facilities are present?
  - What is the potential for supporting partnerships with affinity organizations? Are there potential links to the local art scene and schools?
  - Is the local talent pool for staffing positions adequate?
  - Is the availability of support services adequate?
  - What is the strength of the existing tourism industry, and the number of out-of-town tourists that can be leveraged?

- **Access:**
  - Who are the potential visitors?
  - How easy is it to get to the location?

- **Financial:**
  - Is the proposed area able to support the NNDAM?

- **Impact:**
  - What is the relative degree of positive impact to the community based on existing offerings regarding economic and cultural benefits?
  - Are there gaps in cultural offerings and competing institutions?

	Criteria					
Possible Locations	Identity	Community	Access	Financial	Impact	TOTAL
Albuquerque	3	2	3	2	2	12
Alamogordo	1	1	1	1	1	5
Gallup	2	1	2	1	3	9
Las Cruces	2	2	3	1	1	9
Santa Fe	3	3	3	2	2	13
Silver City	1	1	1	1	1	5
Taos	1	2	1	1	2	7

Notes:

1. 3 is the highest score while 1 is the lowest; maximum score is 15.

Site Location Evaluation Matrix

Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe, and the counties in which they sit, each have a multitude of opportunities to interact with New Deal art and structures. [12] While Gallup has considerably fewer physical New Deal attractions, gallupARTS, a nonprofit focused on growing Gallup's creative economy, has an active virtual museum that focuses on Gallup New Deal art (mentioned earlier in this study). As Gallup is actively working on being identified with New Deal art, it was included among the location options.

[12] The New Deal Legacy, New Mexico Brochures, National New Deal Preservation Association.

# of New Deal Attractions (art or structures)	Albuquerque (Bernalillo County)	Las Cruces (Dona Ana County)	Santa Fe (Santa Fe County)	Gallup (McKinley County)
City Limits	52	32	33	10
Surrounding County	0	27	37	0
TOTAL	52	59	70	10

Number of New Deal Attractions (art or structures) per Location

As shown in the chart above based on data assembled by Kathy Flynn's research, there is an opportunity for Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe to build a virtual or self-guided tour informing visitors about New Deal attractions due to the quantity of surrounding New Deal art and structures. As mentioned earlier, Gallup is already engaged in pursuing visibility and programming tied to New Deal art. One strategy may be to leverage already identified New Deal attractions without a physical structure. Of course, self-guided or virtual tours can also be incorporated into the programmatic offerings of a physical museum.

Potential existing New Deal buildings that could be renovated were identified during some of the interviews. There is certainly a push to consider the National Park Service building as an option in Santa Fe (located on Old Santa Fe Trail), given its proximity to other state-owned and private museums, though there is little indication the National Park Service will relinquish it. There are multiple New Deal structures on the UNM campus in Albuquerque and the campus of New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. Either campus could be an opportunity to showcase New Deal art, and have a built-in university student audience, as well as provide an opening for the creation of an educational or incubator program which would tie into the original spirit of the New Deal. The McKinley County Courthouse in Gallup currently houses art, murals, furniture, and tile work from the New Deal period. While still being actively used as a courthouse, there may be an option to dedicate a larger portion of the building to a small exhibit or museum, as is already being done in the main library. [13]



Rug by Louie Ewing

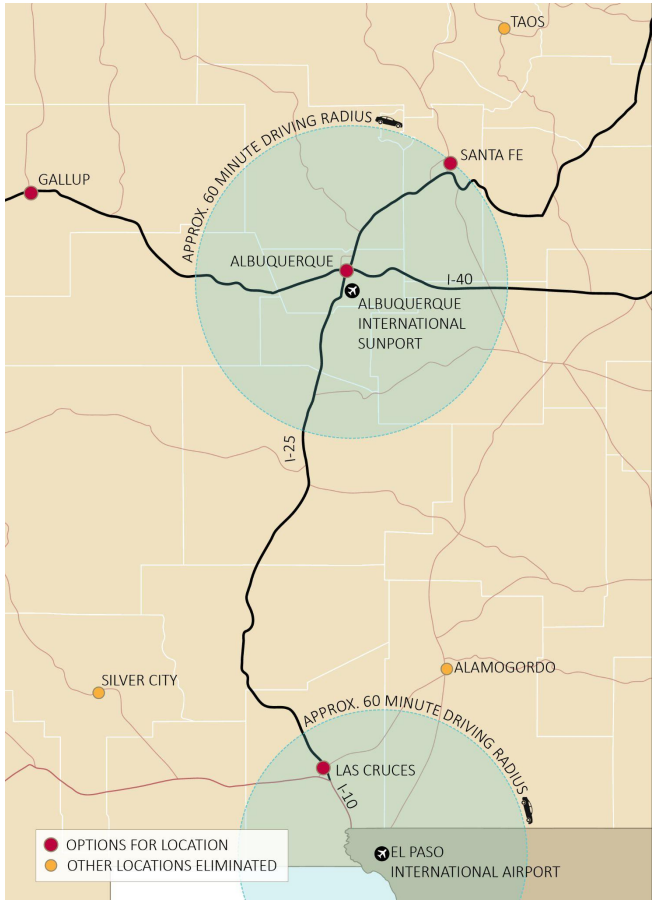
[13] "McKinley County - Gallup District Court." Eleventh Judicial District, September 16, 2024. https://eleventhdistrict.nmcourts.gov/about-this-district/district-courts/mckinley-county-gallup-district-court/.

New Mexico is already beloved by many tourists and residents who are visiting museums, galleries, historic sites, and cultural and natural attractions. Santa Fe and Albuquerque are well known for their arts and cultural offerings, and have the highest tourist visitation, with Las Cruces being slightly less accessible. Museums number 39 in Santa Fe, 28 in Albuquerque, 12 in Las Cruces, and 3 in Gallup as listed in the The Official Museum Directory. Gallup has few museums but is well known for its Native arts market and the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial.

As shown in Part II: Research & Reference Materials (NM Demographic Comparison), New Mexico has a relatively low population for the size of the state. Albuquerque, at 560,274, has the largest population by far, with Las Cruces at 114,892 a distant second. Santa Fe (population 87,505) has the fourth largest population, while Gallup (population 21,889) is twelfth on the list. Albuquerque is easily accessed by an international airport (Sunport) and is close to I-25 and I-40. Santa Fe, directly adjacent to I-25, has its own small airport and is about an hour north of Sunport. Las Cruces, a 3-hour drive from Albuquerque, is less than an hour from an international airport in El Paso, TX. Gallup, right off I-40, is approximately a two-hour drive from Albuquerque.

Median household income in the four locations is highest in Santa Fe ($70,110), somewhat less in Albuquerque ($65,604), and similar in Las Cruces ($55,176) and Gallup ($57,466). Populations of 65 and older track in a similar fashion, with Santa Fe having the highest percentage at 25.8% and Gallup the lowest at 13.7%. An older population and one with a higher median household income often correlate to who has time and money to visit and support civic institutions.

In the team's opinion and depending on who/what institution champions an ambitious idea like the NNDAM, it makes the most sense to consider Albuquerque and Santa Fe as the top contenders for location. Both have oversaturated markets and a tapped-out donor bases; however, both also have strong cultural and institutional infrastructure that could more easily adapt to bringing a vision such as this forward.



Proposed Locations Relative to Each Other and International Airports

BUILDING NEEDS

There are many things to consider when beginning the process of thinking about a museum building. For this portion of the study, building needs have been broken into the following three sections:

- Building Site Needs
- Design Process
- Physical Needs.

In any proposed building designs, sustainable solutions or strategies should be used whenever possible. As New Mexico continues to become hotter and drier, careful consideration for how to use energy-efficient systems and high-efficient building envelopes is becoming ever more important for reducing ongoing maintenance and operational costs. At a minimum, sustainable building codes, such as the current International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) will need to be used. Ideally, other measurable environmentally responsible and resource-efficient or green building systems should be used to improve indoor air quality, reduce the museum's environmental footprint, encourage the use of sustainable materials, and encourage efficient energy, water, and mechanical systems. [14]

Building Site Needs: An architectural site analysis is an important tool in the design process that considers an individual site's location, size, topography, zoning, traffic conditions, existing structures, infrastructure, and climate. It should consider future development needs, or potential changes to surroundings, including road designations, changing cultural patterns, or other significant developments within the area, if known. As it is currently unclear where the NNDAM will be located, this is also information that will be required for a more detailed site selection process.

[14] If the building or renovation is funded, even partially, through the state, the building will need to meet additional New Mexico sustainable building requirements, even if the building is a designated historic building (though requirements may be less). "State Buildings Green Energy Project," NM GSD, accessed June 10, 2025, https://www.generalservices.state.nm.us/green-energy-project/.

- **Building Site Data Collection:** [15] At a minimum, the site should be viewed through the following lenses:

    - **Location:** Where the site is situated; urban, rural, or other.
    - **Neighborhood Context:** The immediate surroundings of the site, including neighborhoods, adjacent businesses.
    - **Zoning and Size:** Dimensional information such as boundaries, easements, height restrictions, percentage of lot coverage, potential future plans, and other restrictions from the local municipality or authority having legal control (such as the state) over the site.
    - **Legal Information:** Lot ownership, including potential restrictions or covenants tied to the lot specifically.
    - **Natural Physical Features:** Actual features such as soil types, trees, rocks, topography, greenery, open space, and drainage patterns.
    - **Manmade Features:** Existing buildings, walls, surrounding vernacular, materials, landscape, and scale of adjacent structures or objects. Identify any potential contamination concerns (lead-based paint, particulates, or leftover toxins from previous uses).
    - **Circulation:** Vehicle and pedestrian movements within, and around the site are required. Consider the timing of movement and duration of heavier patterns while also researching future traffic and road developments. Identify public transportation or other ways of accessing the site.
    - **Utilities:** Identify electricity, gas, water, sewer, and communication services that are situated on or near the site, ideally with distances, materials, depth, and sizes.
    - **Climate:** Information regarding rainfall, snowfall, wind directions, temperatures, and sun path throughout the year.
    - **Sensory:** Audible, visual, and tactile aspects of the site, such as views, traffic, or other noise, etc. Consider how they may change during different times of year and/or throughout a given day.
    - **Human and Cultural:** The cultural, behavioral, psychological, and sociological aspects of the surrounding environment. Identify activities and patterns, density, populations, cultural patterns, employment, income, etc.

[15] “Architecture Site Analysis Guide,” First In Architecture, September 13, 2024, https://www.firstinarchitecture.co.uk/architecture-site-analysis-guide-2/.

- **Site Assumptions:** There are two primary options for a building/structure for housing the NNDAM. The first option is to build from the ground up – while the second is to renovate or add to an existing building (whether standalone for the museum or as part of another institution).

    - **New Site:** Site requirements and size of lot for a new building vary greatly based on building size, parking requirements, city, or county ordinances, etc. Using 15,000 SF and 25,000 SF as a building size (see Design Process below and parking assumptions as laid out in Physical Needs in Part II: Research & Reference consider the following tables which show example calculations to determine minimum lot size needed for a proposed building in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, or Las Cruces.

      The first chart shows that lot sizes range from 1.2 acres needed in Las Cruces to 1.6 acres in Santa Fe for the 15,000 SF building. The second chart, using a 25,000 SF building for a basis, requires a 1.92-acre lot in Las Cruces, a 2.39-acre lot in Albuquerque, and a 2.58-acre lot in Santa Fe. All sizes are preliminary estimates and should be verified against the final building program, site, and zoning requirements.

PROPOSED LOT SIZE (NEW BUILDING)						15,000 SF
Parking	# of Spaces per Area	Total Spaces	Gross SF per Space	Total Area for Parking	Delivery/Truck & Bus Space	Total Parking/ Delivery (SF)
Albuquerque	3 per 1,000 SF Gross	46	300	13,860	3,000	16,860
Santa Fe	1 per 250 SF Net Leasable	55	300	16,368	3,000	19,368
Las Cruces	1 per 600 SF Gross	26	300	7,700	3,000	10,700

Lot Size	Building Size (SF)	Parking/ Delivery	Total Lot Coverage (SF)	Total Lot Needed (SF)	Total Lot Needed (Acres)
Albuquerque	15,400	16,860	32,260	64,520	1.48
Santa Fe	15,400	19,368	34,768	69,536	1.60
Las Cruces	15,400	10,700	26,100	52,200	1.20

Notes:
1. Net Leasable is defined as gross building area less structure/walls, mechanical, and stairwells.
2. Assume 3,000 SF for truck/bus/and delivery turnaround (to be confirmed based on site layout)
3. Rule of thumb for lot size is that lot coverage (or built area) is 50% of total lot size needed.
4. 43,560 SF = 1 Acre

Estimated Lot Size Needed for 15,000 SF Building

The second chart, using a 25,000 SF building for a basis, requires a 1.92-acre lot in Las Cruces, a 2.39-acre lot in Albuquerque, and a 2.58-acre lot in Santa Fe. All sizes are preliminary estimates and should be verified against the final building program, site, and zoning requirements.

PROPOSED LOT SIZE (NEW BUILDING)						25,000 SF
Parking	# of Spaces per Area	Total Spaces	Gross SF per Space	Total Area for Parking	Delivery/Truck & Bus Space	Total Parking/ Delivery (SF)
Albuquerque	3 per 1,000 SF Gross	78	300	23,286	3,000	26,286
Santa Fe	1 per 250 SF Net Leasable	91	300	27,305	3,000	30,305
Las Cruces	1 per 600 SF Gross	43	300	12,937	3,000	15,937

Lot Size	Building Size (SF)	Parking/ Delivery	Total Lot Coverage (SF)	Total Lot Needed (SF)	Total Lot Needed (Acres)
Albuquerque	25,874	26,286	52,160	104,319	2.39
Santa Fe	25,874	30,305	56,178	112,357	2.58
Las Cruces	25,874	15,937	41,810	83,621	1.92

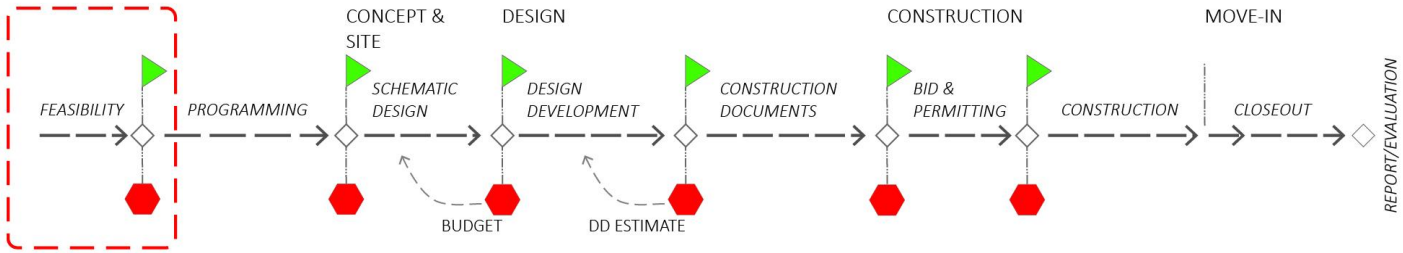
Notes:
1. Net Leasable is defined as gross building area less structure/walls, mechanical, and stairwells.
2. Assume 3,000 SF for truck/bus/and delivery turnaround (to be confirmed based on site layout)
3. Rule of thumb for lot size is that lot coverage (or built area) is 50% of total lot size needed.
4. 43,560 SF = 1 Acre

Estimated Lot Size Needed for 25,000 SF Building

- **Site with Existing Structures (Building Renovation):** Depending on building programming and site requirements, it may make more sense to utilize an existing building or institution and its infrastructure. As the number of parking spaces will still be based on the individual municipalities' parking requirements, it is safe to assume that a similar-sized property will still be required. While there are benefits to using an existing structure, retrofitting an old (historic) building to meet the requirements of a museum can be cost-prohibitive, and sometimes not possible.

The Design Process

The design process is structured to provide multiple opportunities for check-ins and "GO/NO GO" decision moments through a project. A typical project consists of the following phases: Feasibility, Programming, Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction Documents, Bid & Permitting, Construction, and Project Close-Out. (The design process for exhibits is similar.) Currently in the Feasibility process, if it is determined that the project should move forward, the next phase could be Programming, though identification of a site will be critical. Per the chart below, the vertical lines indicate decision moments with the green arrows indicating a "GO" while the red stop sign below indicates a "NO GO" decision or the need to backtrack and conduct further study.



The Design Process

- **Programming**

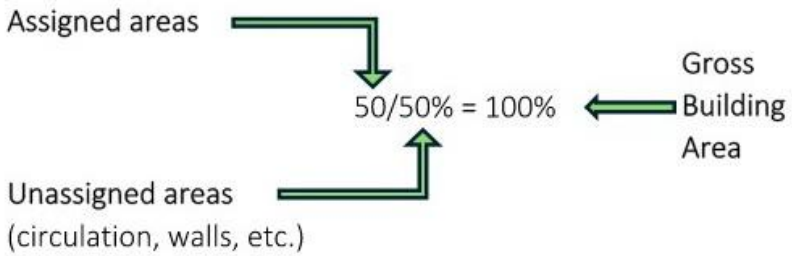
  Programming is a process leading to the statement of an architectural problem and the requirements to be met in offering or providing a solution. It is the search for sufficient information to clarify, understand, and state the problem. Programming is problem seeking while design is *problem solving*. [16] More accurately titled Building Programming, this phase provides overall vision ideas of what the building may become, identification of spaces and functions, desired adjacency between functions, general building criteria, prioritized interior space needs, a preliminary identification of building codes and potential impacts, as well as meetings with identified stakeholders.

[16] Pat Guthire, "*The Architect's Portable Handbook*." (The McGraw-Hill Companies. 2003), 37.

Stakeholders may include owners, interested parties, potential users of the building (school groups, tour groups, artists, etc.), advocates for fundraising, authorities having jurisdiction (municipalities or other governmental agencies), caterers or shop managers (if those spaces may be leased), professional staff, and maintenance staff (particularly if an existing building is being renovated), among others who are identified for the individual project.

- Often, particularly in a museum project, a conceptual design phase is included at the end of programming. This is an opportunity for the design team to develop an initial set of criteria and drawings that can be used for a capital campaign, marketing, and to confirm support for a project. Museums are expensive and the conceptual design drawings allow the idea to be assessed among potential donors and funders for what may be possible to build. It is also an opportunity to provide a first look at a compelling vision for architectural and exhibit design that begins to define the museum's unique identity.

- **Building and Space:** At a conceptual level, establishing the size of a building usually starts with determining the spaces and functions needed to meet the programmatic requirements. This is typically described in terms of net floor area (floor area based on interior dimensions, sometimes excluding interior walls) and referred to as "assigned areas." "Unassigned areas" (circulation, walls, mechanical space, etc.) account for the remaining required space. Together, these create the gross floor area (total area based on outside dimensions). For a museum, the ratio of assigned areas to unassigned areas (or building area efficiency) is typically fairly equal (i.e., 50%/505).



Building Area Efficiency Ratio Diagram

Museums tend to have a higher ratio of unassigned space to assigned space, which increases the size of the building. In New Mexico, depending on whether renovating a building or new, the vernacular architecture also tends towards thicker and/or battered walls (on the exterior and interior), use of nichos, and needed space for wood posts, vigas and beams. For initial starting purposes, the team assumed that unassigned space for this building should be in the median at approximately 40% (think of a full-sized automobile versus a super luxury vehicle).

	Unassigned Area %				
Breakdown of Unassigned Areas	Economical	Moderate	Excellent	Grand	Superb
Circulation	16.0%	20.0%	22.0%	24.0%	25.0%
Mechanical / Electrical	5.0%	5.5%	7.5%	8.0%	10.0%
Structure and Walls	7.0%	7.0%	8.0%	9.5%	10.0%
Public Toilets	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	2.0%	2.5%
Janitor Closets	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%
Unassigned Storage	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	1.5%
TOTAL	30.0%	35.0%	40.0%	45.0%	50.0%

Percentage & Makeup of Unassigned Building Area

Based on comparisons of other similar facilities, the team homed in on two potential building sizes: approximately 15,000 SF or 25,000 SF, consisting of following spaces for consideration: Lobby, Exhibition Area, Multi-Purpose/ Classroom, Café/Snack Area, Administration (offices/support spaces), Collections Storage, and Collections Support (potentially office, security, receiving area). Per the chart below, the smaller building does not include a gift shop and all spaces, with the exception of administration and collections support spaces, are significantly smaller. See Part II: Research & Reference Materials for an example of portions of a more developed programming document.

PROPOSED MUSEUM PROGRAM			15,000 SF
	Space		Net Area
Assigned Area 60%	Lobby		1,000
	Gift Shop		0
	Exhibition Area		1,500
	Multi-Purpose/Classroom		800
	Café/Snack Area		850
	Administration		1,750
	Collections		3,900
	Collections Support		1,200
		Sub-Total	11,000
Unassigned 40%	Circulation	20.0%	2,200
	Mechanical Room	9.0%	990
	Structure/Walls	7.0%	770
	Restrooms	3.0%	330
	Janitor Closets	0.5%	55
	Misc. Storage	0.5%	55
		TOTAL SF (GROSS)	15,400

PROPOSED MUSEUM PROGRAM			25,000 SF
	Space		Net Area
Assigned Area 59%	Lobby		1,350
	Gift Shop		750
	Exhibition Area		2,900
	Multi-Purpose/Classroom		2,300
	Café/Snack Area		1,200
	Administration		1,750
	Collections		6,800
	Collections Support		1,300
		Sub-Total	18,350
Unassigned 41%	Circulation	20.0%	3,670
	Mechanical Room	8.0%	1,468
	Structure/Walls	9.0%	1,652
	Restrooms	2.5%	459
	Janitor Closets	0.5%	92
	Misc. Storage	1.0%	183.5
		TOTAL SF (GROSS)	25,874

Simplified Programming Spreadsheet for 15,000 SF & 25,000 SF Buildings

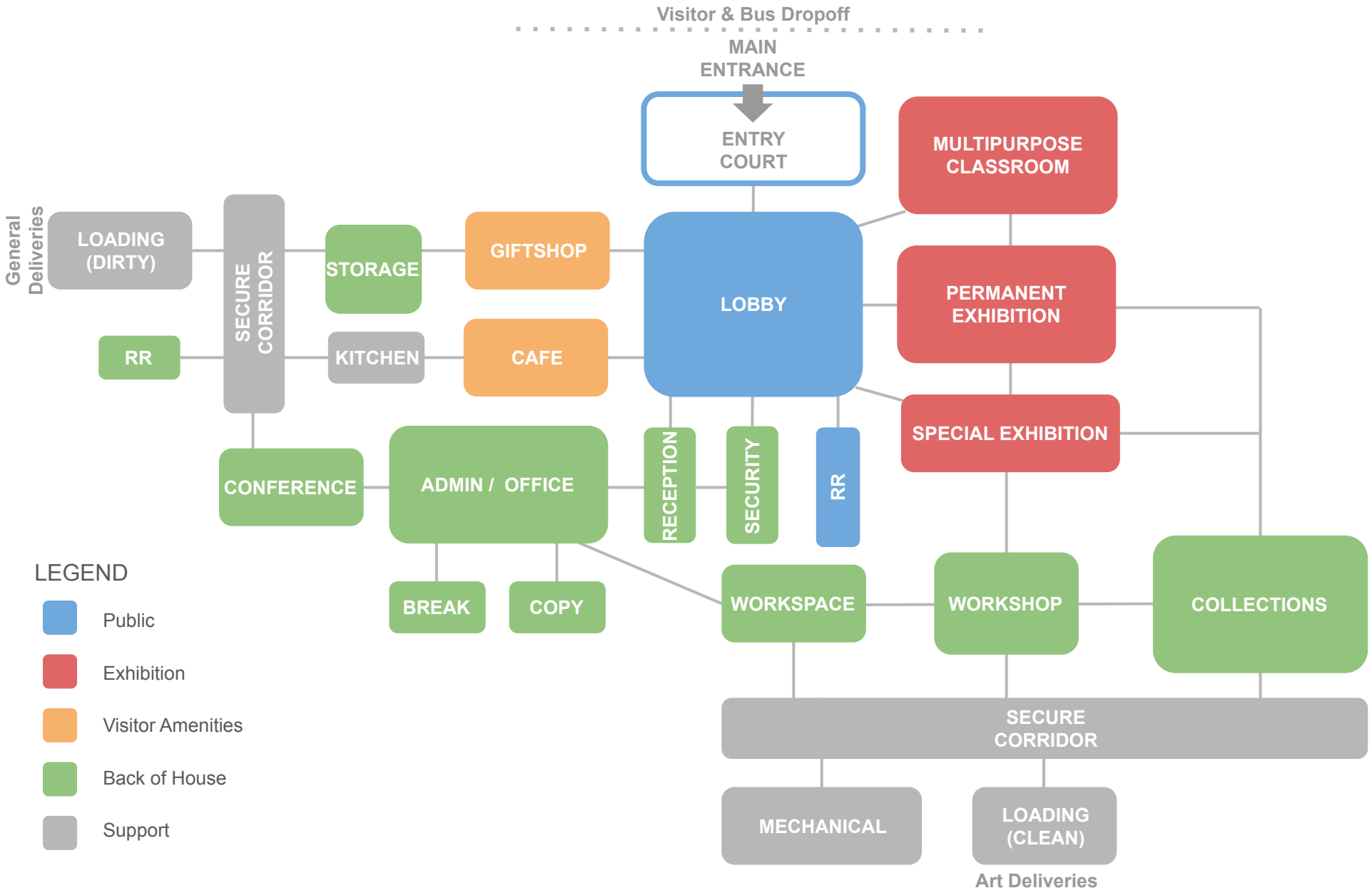
It will be critical to review the standards provided by GSA and potential other loaning institutions in developing a space program. Best practices and standards for federal institutions include a receiving protocol that may require more space than provided for in the above two examples. If it is determined that the appropriate model for success in New Mexico includes more classroom or educational functions, programmatic and space requirements will also change to reflect that model.

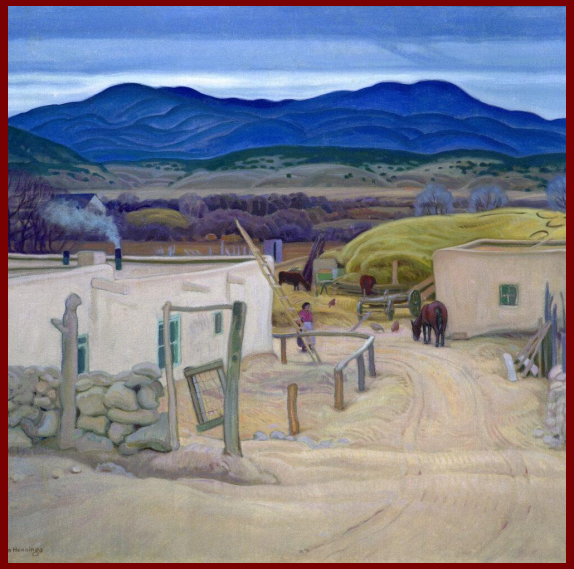
Bubble Diagram

Once spaces, functions, and areas are determined, a diagram is created to represent spatial relationships with lines or arrows between to show adjacencies and importance. This is called a bubble diagram and is used to help visualize potential space planning and circulation patterns before the creation of more detailed plans.

The bubble diagram on the next page is only one representation of how a New Deal Museum could function (note that there are more spaces/functions identified here than in the proposed programs shown above; this is another method of developing questions for further study).

Space Planning Bubble Diagram









06 Potential Interpretive Approach

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

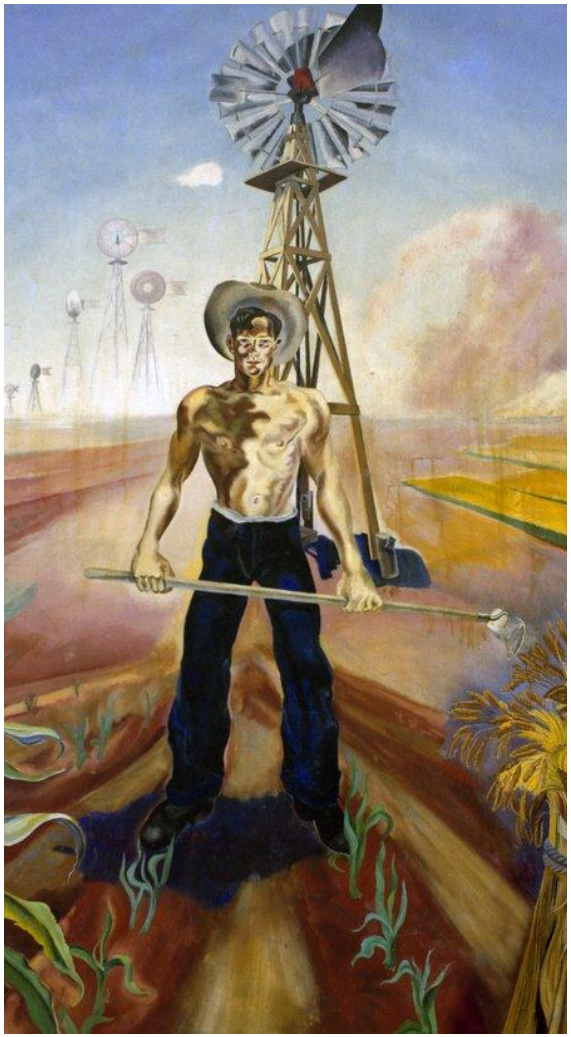
INTRODUCTION

A Model for a New Deal Museum

As the team clarified earlier in this report, pursuing a free-standing museum at this time is not advisable due to financial reasons and the absence of a thorough market study to assess the level of interest in a museum dedicated to New Deal art in New Mexico. The process of researching and assessing the feasibility of a museum must include an assessment and exploration of the viability, scope, and nature of the visitor experience – the essential component for a museum serving the public. The work outlined below is a testament to the fact that there are many ways and avenues to engage the public in the stories of New Deal art, artists, and this period to make it relevant in today's world. Further, this work demonstrates that the New Deal has diverse avenues of engagement, should momentum for a new museum arise at some point in the future.

The team created what it believes is the most promising conceptual model based on our research, interviews and collective knowledge of successful museums. The hybrid incubator model describes what a potential prototypical museum would look like and that could be used to both test its feasibility and determine what it could potentially offer to a community. Ultimately, having an agreed-upon model allows potential stakeholders – internal and external – to visualize a possible outcome. A shared understanding of a possible approach promotes alignment about possible goals, ideas about potential visitor experiences, and potential, as yet unidentified, community benefits remembering that museums today are evolving from static repositories into dynamic, interactive, and inclusive institutions that respond to the changing needs of diverse audiences.

The ideas and concepts below are drawn from the unique significance of New Deal art and New Deal programs in all of our lives. This includes its value as a body of aesthetic work, its historical importance as a formative chapter in American cultural and political history, and its powerful representation of the nation's diverse identities, lived experiences, and collective aspirations. Any future New Deal art museum experience should be both culturally resonant and broadly accessible—one that honors the legacy of New Deal art while engaging contemporary audiences in meaningful dialogue and experiences.



Close-up of the "Last Frontier" by Russel Hunter

POTENTIAL MUSEUM CONCEPT

Strategic Framework

Mission and Vision
The mission and vision for any new museum must impart clarity and impact that engenders enthusiasm, curiosity, and purpose that is meaningful to a broad and diverse public and informs the work of the governing body, director, and staff of the institution. In the case of a museum in New Mexico, the public includes residents and communities across the state, and national and international visitors.

The mission must convey three vital components: why the museum exists, how the museum makes a difference in the world, and how the museum impacts the future. In other words, the mission relays a strategic position that is relevant to the greater community and region where it exists. The mission is the institutional compass that guides the work, the public engagement efforts, and how the museum operates.

The vision is distinct from the mission in that it conveys the envisioned reality in the distant future, typically 10-to-15 years out at a minimum. It is bigger than the institution itself, yet conveys how the institution contributes to a better world as a result of its efforts.

In both the case of the mission and the vision, each could express how the heart of the New Deal provides inspiration to connect people to a movement nearly one hundred years old to contemporary life today.

"Spirit of the New Deal"

The Big Idea
In museum planning, a Big Idea serves as the central, unifying concept that drives the design, interpretation, and visitor experience of an exhibition or institution. It is a clear and compelling thematic statement that shapes content development and defines the intended impact on audiences.

"The Spirit of the New Deal" is proposed as the guiding Big Idea for this future museum or institution —authentically reflecting the values, aspirations, and legacy of the New Deal art programs, while positioning the museum with a distinct identity and cultural relevance.

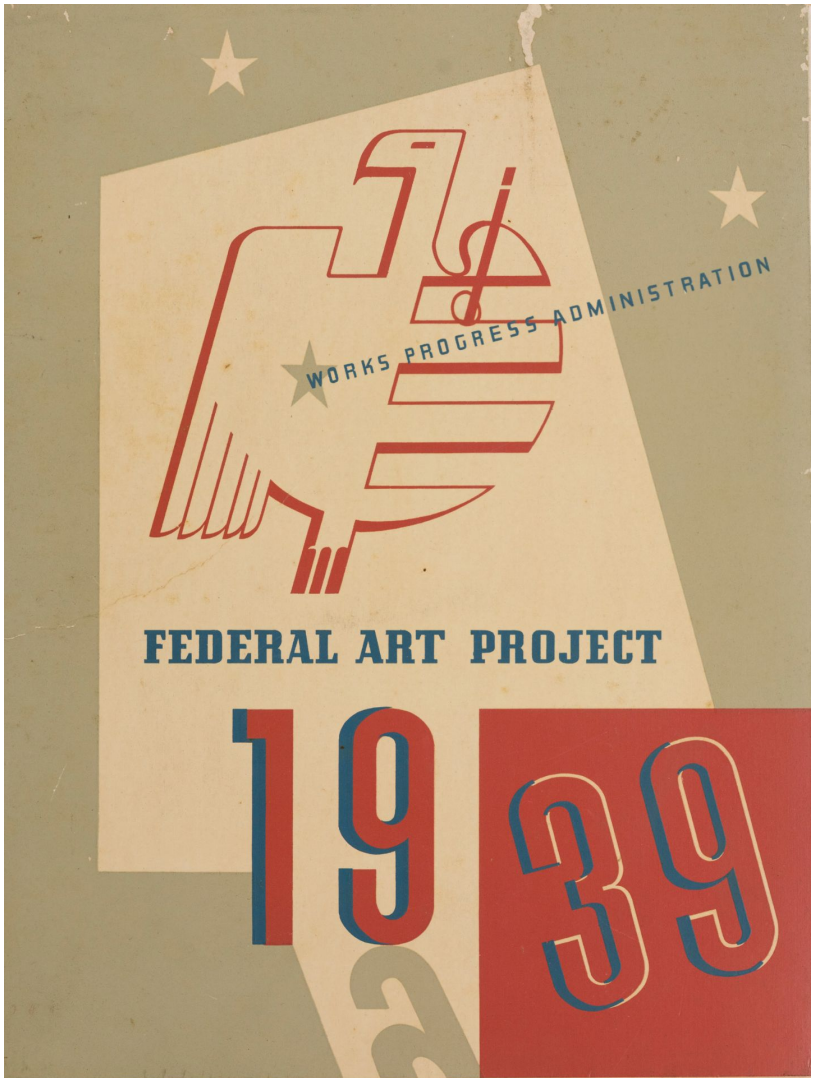
The Conceptual Basis

New Deal art programs were conceived as a bold and democratic initiative to make art accessible to the American public while capturing the everyday experiences, challenges, and aspirations of life in the United States. At their core, these programs sought to elevate art as a reflection and expression of American life, embedding creativity into the fabric of public spaces and daily experiences.

A defining characteristic of the New Deal Art movement was its commitment to inclusivity and representation. It provided platforms for diverse voices—welcoming artists of diverse backgrounds, identities, and regions—and offered unprecedented opportunities for emerging and underrepresented creators to contribute to the national cultural narrative.

Beyond painting and sculpture, New Deal initiatives also supported a wide range of artistic disciplines, including architecture, decorative arts, and functional crafts such as furniture, murals, and textiles. These elements—many of which remain in public buildings today—reflect a comprehensive approach to art-making that embraced both aesthetics and utility.

These interdisciplinary and inclusive values offer a rich foundation for a potential New Deal art museum. It could become a space that highlights work physically and virtually, allowing visitors to engage with the full spectrum of New Deal creativity. Highlighting this legacy could reinforce the museum's potential role as both a cultural repository and an active participant in the ongoing story of American expression.



Calendar Cover by unknown

Positioning

Positioning has to do with how a museum or institution presents itself to the public and how it aims to be perceived by potential donors, visitors, and the broader community. The New Deal art programs played a pivotal role in establishing a distinctly American artistic identity. By encouraging the portrayal of everyday life, regional landscapes, and social realities, these programs laid the groundwork for artistic movements such as Social Realism and Regionalism. Many works produced during this era have become enduring cultural landmarks, capturing a transformative period in American history and advancing public appreciation for art created through public investment.

Equally significant is the democratizing impact of the New Deal art initiatives. These programs broadened access to the arts—both for audiences and artists—by commissioning public works in everyday spaces and supporting voices historically underrepresented in the art world.



"Buffalo Hunt" by Velino Herrera

Proposed Positioning for a Model Museum Concept
Ideally, the positioning for the proposed museum should be configured to fully leverage the subject matter and cultural legacy of New Deal art, aligned with identified potential collections, and realize the Big Idea. Imagine a museum that is a hybrid institution—a center for art, history, and artist incubation—defined by these four elements:

- **Art & Aesthetic Legacy** – Showcasing the artistic significance of New Deal works and their influence on American visual culture.
- **Social & Cultural History** – Exploring the historical context, lived experiences, and societal impact depicted through New Deal art.
- **Community & Civic Engagement** – Acting as a platform for dialogue, education, and participation through public programs and events.
- **Artist Development & Innovation** – Supporting emerging voices through residencies, commissions, and creative partnerships that echo the New Deal's spirit of opportunity and innovation.

This multifaceted positioning could elevate the museum to not only a place of preservation and display but also one of relevance, reflection, and regeneration.

Potential Key Offerings

In the museum world, the word ‘offerings’ refers to the various programs, services, and experiences provided to visitors and the public. The Hybrid Art/Incubator Museums could be built around the following four potential interconnected core offerings designed to overlap in both subject matter and display strategy. This integrated approach is intended to enrich a visitor’s experience and broaden interpretive possibilities.

- **Display & Interpretation of New Mexico Collection**
  This offering could focus on New Deal art originating from a host state, such as New Mexico, and the surrounding region. It reflects the regional diversity of the New Deal art programs and leverages the availability of local collections, including works permanently installed in public buildings and those available for loan from within the state or region.

- **Display & Interpretation of National Collection (Virtual)**
  This offering addresses the geographically dispersed nature of New Deal art across the United States, much of which remains difficult for the public to access due to its location in remote or restricted settings.

- **Interpretation of the Context of the New Deal**
  This offering could provide visitors with the historical, political, and cultural context necessary to fully understand and appreciate the significance of New Deal art. By grounding the exhibition experience in the broader story of the New Deal, this offering connects the art to the transformative policies, social movements, and national values that shaped its creation.

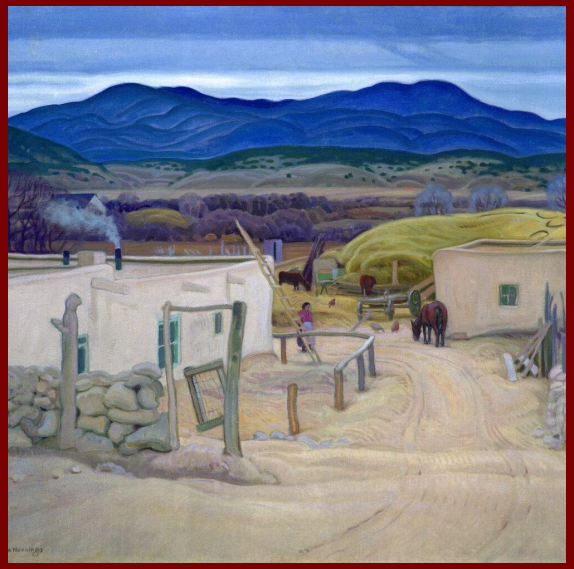
- **Creative Incubator & Community Engagement Hub**
  This offering could extend the potential museum’s mission beyond exhibition, transforming it into an active platform for artistic creation, training, and community participation. Modeled in spirit after the original New Deal programs, it could position the museum not only as a cultural destination but also as a vital incubator for contemporary creativity.

- **Outreach and Public Accessibility**
  This potential offering could be a traveling outreach program modeled on the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street (MoMS) initiative. This model would allow the potential or future museum to deliver meaningful cultural and educational experiences to rural and underserved communities across the state.

Interpretive Themes

Ultimately, there are many rich and varied themes from New Deal art that could shape the beginnings of content, narrative, and audience engagement (and participation) for exhibits or other content. The New Deal art programs represent a foundational moment in American cultural history, offering both inspiration and structure for possible interpretive themes, such as:

- **Regionalism & Everyday Life:** Artists were encouraged to portray the richness of American life across regions—capturing landscapes, industries, rural communities, and urban realities.
- **Public Art & Accessibility:** A central aim of the New Deal programs was to democratize access to art.
- **Celebration of Cultural Diversity:** The programs highlighted the cultural contributions of African American, Native American, immigrant, and other underrepresented communities.
- **Social Realism & Hope:** Many artists tackled the social issues of the Great Depression head-on—portraying hardship, resilience, and community solidarity.
- **Artists as Essential Workers:** The New Deal positioned artists as integral contributors to society, offering professional employment and affirming art as a public good
- Empowerment Through Representation: **The** programs created space for historically marginalized voices—portraying sharecroppers, factory workers, and Indigenous communities—through both subject matter and artist participation.
- **Support for Emerging Talent:** Young and emerging artists were given vital early-career support. These platforms allowed artists to experiment, innovate, and exhibit their work to broad audiences, helping shape modern American art.







07 Recommendations & Conclusions

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the complexities discovered, including donor fatigue, the current economic climate, a need to identify a funding champion or an individual or organization who has the time and energy to drive the idea of a National New Deal Art Museum in New Mexico forward, we do not recommend proceeding with a free-standing museum dedicated to New Deal art in New Mexico at this time. Ironically, as discovered through this study, there are only a very few institutions or museums that focus on New Deal art, despite the significance that it was a nation-wide program that transformed and supported many rural communities and individuals through the Great Depression. Additionally, it is striking that there is not an existing museum nationally or otherwise that focuses on New Deal art.

We do not question the inherent value of New Deal art, nor the contribution that it has had on New Mexico; rather, our concern is finding a viable path forward that is realistic, affordable, and sustainable. As such, we offer the following recommendations or options:

National New Deal Art Museum, New Mexico
To recap, we do not recommend proceeding with a free-standing museum dedicated to New Deal art in New Mexico at this time. As discussed in the prior sections, there are too many mitigating issues that have to be addressed before considering whether proceeding is advisable at some point in the future. A brief reprieve gives those in leadership roles time to gauge and build interest, identify potential leaders, conduct marketing studies, and secure funding for a project of this magnitude.

Collaborations with Existing Museums
Through the research for this project, we learned that a number of existing museums in our state hold New Deal art, including the New Mexico Museum of Art, the New Mexico History Museum, and the Museum of International Folk Art, to name three. It is likely that many other institutions across the state have New Deal art holdings as well.

Explore collaborating with existing museums in New Mexico through efforts, such as:

- Co-curating and mounting an exhibition that explores New Deal Art across New Mexico. This would require securing financial support to plan, explore, and mount such an exhibit.



Mural restoration

- Exploring opening an exhibit space in a museum dedicated to showing New Deal art on an ongoing basis, with a focus on New Mexico. This would provide a way to measure public interest in the New Deal art and reveal if a long-term plan for the ongoing exhibiting of New Deal art is viable.
- Mounting a public survey to learn about the level of knowledge and interest in New Deal art is fundamental to getting an angle on what will be of interest and draw visitors, whether an online exhibit or a physical installation.
- Conducting a survey of existing private and state institutions with New Deal art, ideally cataloged, to better understand how much is currently held in in New Mexico. Depending on funding and capacity, we recommend developing a state-wide list if possible.

Collaborations with Existing Arts Organizations

This option can be as creative and unconventional as those who shepherd this idea forward. Many of the hallmarks of the New Deal are tied to spurring creativity across the United States through supporting local artists and drawing interest in the process of making art through the Hybrid Arts/Incubator Model. This could include:

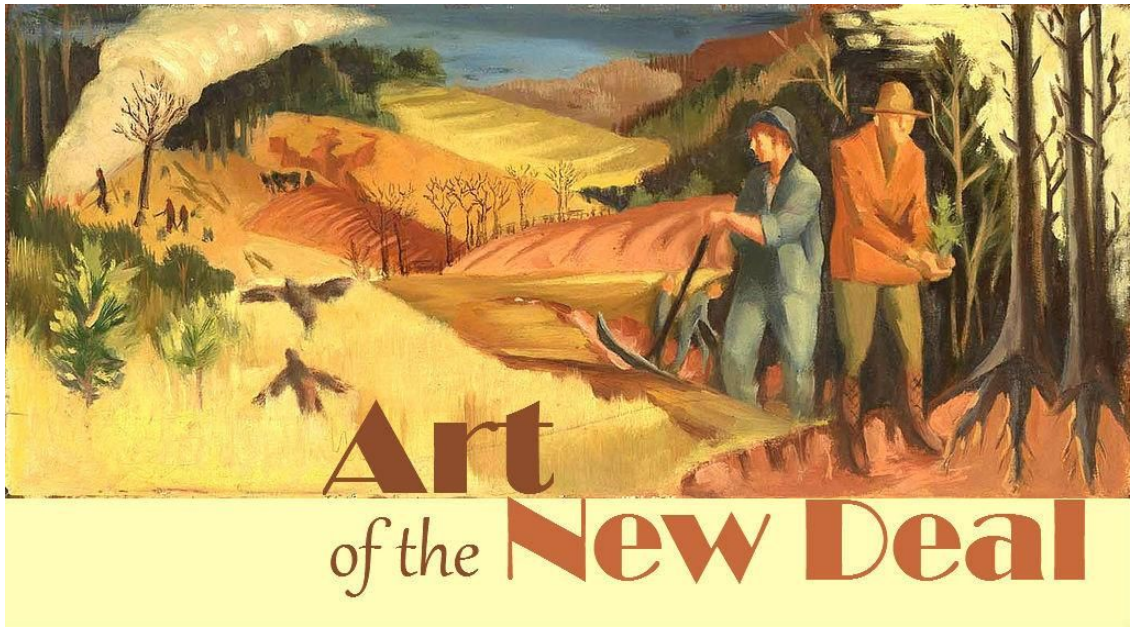
- Experiment with a local arts organization to create an arts incubator in the spirit of the New Deal, providing studio space and labs for different artists to come together to create innovative projects, perhaps for display, installation, or a digital project. This could be much less expensive than a new physical project. An effort such as this would go hand-in-hand with existing arts entities, where collaborating is a smart alternative. It certainly supports the Creative Economy in New Mexico.

A Word of Caution

Before any of these options can be advanced, it will be key to identify individuals who are committed to leading the effort and major sources of financial support to launch efforts for the project. Without the essential leadership in place and significant funding, it will be challenging to proceed on any front.

Before any of these options can be advanced, it will be key to identify individuals who are committed to leading the effort and major sources of financial support to launch efforts for the project. Without the essential leadership in place and significant funding, it will be challenging to proceed on any front.

CONCLUSION



Deforestation Mural Study by Hollis Holbrook

New Deal art is part of the national ethos. It is a time capsule of landscapes and daily life between 1933 and 1943. Artistic expression is evident in buildings, photography, paintings, murals, furniture, and sculpture across the United States, including in New Mexico. Thanks to federal support, artists of all backgrounds – Hispanic/Latinos, Indigenous, Black, Japanese, white, and more – were given the opportunity to do what they do best, make art that enriches the lives of citizens. The breadth of art exists in communities across the country – rural and urban – much of it in plain sight. Despite the significance of this time period, New Deal art is still underappreciated and less well-known than it should be.

Every member of our team is grateful for this opportunity and the trust placed in us. As residents of New Mexico, the team members care deeply that the rich heritage of New Deal art across our state is preserved, made accessible to the public, and integrated into the heritage of our state for generations to come. As such, we sincerely hope that there is an avenue in the future that can be pursued regarding New Deal art in New Mexico.

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

National New Deal Art Museum

Feasibility Study

June 2025

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