



EDD

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Outdoor Equity Fund Receives \$12,500 REI Grant *REI State Policy Grant Awarded to Help Underserved Youth in New Mexico*

SANTA FE, N.M. – REI Co-op awarded the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) a State Policy Grant of \$12,500 to use in support of the Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF), EDD Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes announced today.

The Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), a division of EDD, will manage this and other funds to support the OEF. ORD Director Axie Navas completed the grant application for the state. Navas was also instrumental in creating the OEF to provide investments in transformative outdoor recreation experiences for underserved New Mexican youth.

The mission of the ORD is to expand the outdoor recreation economy to every corner of New Mexico and bring jobs, prosperity, and wellness to all state residents. In order to attain these goals, the division is focusing on promoting sustainable economic development, conservation & access, equity, education, and health and wellness. The OEF goes a long way in supporting these goals, striving to introduce youth, 18 and younger, primarily from low-income communities, to nature and outdoor recreation. The OEF will be distributed equitably between the state's tribal, rural, land grant, and urban areas.

"The COVID 19 health emergency has made everyone more appreciative of New Mexico's outdoor resources," Cabinet Secretary Keyes said. "We thank REI and other donors who are committed to helping our young people experience these special places."

"These contributions from REI and other groups will help the Outdoor Equity Fund fulfill its mission of serving New Mexico's youth and ensuring that we invest in the next generation of land and water stewards," Navas said.

REI invited EDD to apply for its invitation-only grant program at the end of May. REI Co-op grants are supported from company profits from the previous year. The [co-op's values](#) line up perfectly with the ORD core belief that access to the outdoors is a basic human right.

"REI is pleased to support New Mexico's innovative Outdoor Equity Fund," Marc Berejka, REI's Community & Government Affairs Director, said. "The pandemic has sparked health, social, and economic crises. Especially in these challenging times, it's important that everyone – irrespective of background – be able to enjoy the healing benefits of time in nature."

The OEF has also received significant funding from Local Flavor Magazine, the

Environmental Education Association of NM, Turner Foundation, the Wilderness Society, and is expecting additional grants in the very near future.

If you are interested in learning more about the Outdoor Equity Fund, or would like to make a monetary contribution, please contact ORD Director [Axie Navas](#) for more information.

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Photo courtesy of Wings of America

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

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