



RDC helps family farm expand

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Tommy Casados is a 4th generation rancher who runs C4 Enterprises cattle ranch in northern Rio Arriba County, near Tierra Amarillo. After working for a time away from the ranch, Tommy returned home in 2016 and took over operations with his wife Jessica and their four children, looking for ways to grow the business and secure the future of the family enterprise.

“Our goal is to someday be on the plate of almost every New Mexican who wants real grass-fed beef raised right here in New Mexico. We want to deliver directly to the consumer,” says Casados.

Collaboration between C4, the Regional Development Corporation (RDC) and other economic development organizations is helping Tommy achieve his goal.

The RDC is an Española-based nonprofit that works to build a stronger economy in Northern New Mexico, and their rural outreach program contacted Tommy in late 2018. Working together with Rio Arriba County economic development, they helped C4 plan how it could expand their operation to increase production of grass-feed, grass-finished high-end cuts of meats, and value-added products including jerky, beef sticks and sausages.

The most ambitious part of the plan included construction of a meat processing facility on the ranch to replace work being done by a facility out-of-state in Colorado. The facility’s services would also be available for other area farmers and hunters to use (some 2,500 elk and deer are harvested annually from nearby ranches, game parks and the Jicarilla Apache Reservation).

The RDC and Rio Arriba County team recognized that the project could potentially qualify for state Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) funding, so they reached out to the New Mexico State Economic Development.

A series of meetings through the first half of 2019 led to a \$75,000 LEDA grant and additional funding for hiring and training the new additional employees through the state’s JTIP program (Job Training Incentive Program).

“We are honored to partner with the Casados family so they can develop their ranch land, provide a service to area hunters, and create jobs in Rio Arriba County,” says New Mexico Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes. “This is home-grown rural economic development.”

In addition to the \$75,000 state grant, C4 plan to invest \$400,000 in the project, which is projected to create eight full-time jobs.

The RDC has maintained contact with Casados throughout the state's process and has continued to offer assistance and support.

"Tommy's story is a great example of the RDC successfully reaching business owners and connecting them with critical resources," says Val Alonzo, executive director of the RDC. "The additional revenue generated will flow through the local economy, and production and manufacturing will be moved from out-of-state to within New Mexico."

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