



Preparing for a post-COVID world

February 4, 2021

With this being the first issue of Community Connections this year, I wanted to provide an update on how the Laboratory is preparing for 2021 as we start to explore what Northern New Mexico and the world will look like after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

For right now, our first priority remains keeping Lab employees and the wider community safe. The Laboratory has been approved by the state to administer vaccines to employees, but the majority of employees will continue to be working from home for some time to come. For those who have to be on-site, we have been staggering shifts, allowing flexible hours, and using in-house capability to test employees.

Whether from home or at the Laboratory, employees have a lot of work to be doing. Congress has passed an appropriation for the fiscal year 2021, giving the Laboratory a budget of over \$3.7 billion - a sizable increase over the previous year. We are being asked to do more work on behalf of the country than ever before.

Increased opportunities for Northern New Mexicans

This directly translates into jobs and opportunities for Northern New Mexicans, whether from new hiring at the Lab itself, or from increased business activity with companies in the region who help us meet our new challenges.

Part of the budget increase is being used for construction projects at the Laboratory, with new buildings, substantial renovations, and new transportation and communications infrastructure.

The Laboratory is also looking at creative options in how employees will work in the future. The pandemic has taught us that people can be productive in a wide range of ways, which opens up increased opportunities for flexibility.

New working arrangements

We currently have a pilot teleworking project in place that is separate from the COVID restrictions. So when the rest of the staff return to work in person, over 1000 Lab employees will remain working from home for the majority of their time, having access to drop-in office spaces when required. This frees up space in Los Alamos for work that has to happen in person, and provides benefits to employees by reducing the time spent commuting, and giving them more flexibility.

The Laboratory is also looking to lease space within 50 miles of Los Alamos, which will also make some public-facing Laboratory functions more accessible, and provide an economic boost to the areas where the new offices are located.

Continued support for the community

With all this positive news, however, we are also very aware that the pandemic has caused great hardship to many people across Northern New Mexico. We are committed to expanding our strong community partnership and outreach efforts to help in the recovery, and are delighted that Laboratory operator Triad is supporting the Laboratory's work in this area with an investment of \$2.5 million through its own Community Commitment Plan.

Nobody can be certain about what life will look like in a post-COVID world, but I am sure that working together with our partners, we will all end 2021 in a much stronger position than we ended 2020.

—Kathy Keith

Director, Community Partnerships Office at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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