THE PAUL L. FOSTER AND ALEJANDRA DE LA VEGA FOSTER INNOVATION EXCHANGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE BORDERPLEX

ARROWHEAD CENTER

Foster Innovation Exchange

FY 2021 GIFT REPORT
With the generous support of the de la Vega Foster’s, Arrowhead Center at New Mexico State University (NMSU) created the Foster Innovation Exchange (FIX) to bring together academia, industry, government, and community sectors to support innovation and entrepreneurship in the Borderplex. In its fifth year, FIX is expanding its reach across borders – state and international. Entrepreneurs and businesses throughout the region will have access to proven business acceleration programming; new partnerships are being forged with collaborators in Mexico; and FIX will play a vital role in “soft landing” services for international businesses seeking to expand or relocate into U.S. markets.

"FIX CONTINUES TO ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION. WE ARE PARTNERING WITH DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE BORDER TO CREATE THE APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING TO FULFILL THE GAPS FOR ENTREPRENEURS IN OUR BORDERPLEX REGION."

-Carlos Murguia, FIX Director
Meaningful collaboration among economic development stakeholders in the Borderplex is a cornerstone strategy of FIX. There are many organizations, programs, groups, and individuals committed to growing the economy and improving the quality of life in our communities. Arrowhead Center signed an MOU with the Artificial Intelligence Center (AIC) in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. The MOU will allow both organizations to explore opportunities for collaboration, including but not limited to launching an Artificial Intelligence Sprint business accelerator for startups in the Borderplex. This new agreement increases Artificial Intelligence capabilities on both sides of the border.

During FY 2021, FIX teamed with several organizations in Las Cruces, El Paso, Juárez, Chihuahua, and Sonora, including CoWork Oasis, Borderplex Alliance, Success Through Technology Education [STTE] Foundation, Pioneers 21, Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA), International Business Accelerator (IBA) at Santa Teresa, Medical Center of the Americas Foundation, TechHUB, Innovation Week Chihuahua, Orion Ventures, IA Center, CIITA, Sonora Innova and COECYT, providing support for planning, operations, events, and initiatives.
FOSTER INNOVATION EXCHANGE
HIGHLIGHTS

MOU WITH SONORA
Arrowhead Center has signed an agreement of understanding (MOU) with the government of Sonora, Mexico after Arrowhead was selected as an international business accelerator through Sonora’s State Science and Technology Council.

STUDENTS ENTREPRENEURS
Through FIX Product Design Awards, NMSU students received no-cost access to product design/prototyping equipment, allowing them to create a minimum viable product and pitch to investors.

GAMMA MENDEZ, AWS
CEO of essGO app, participated in BizSprint El Paso and received support to launch his app.
Steven Alderete | Shark Tank

Steven was able to 3D print his prototype through a FIX Design Award. He also pitched at Aggie Shark Tank and got investment from the Arrowhead Innovation Fund.

Sydney Lienemann

Sydney designed a racking system to hold batteries for her prototype through a FIX Design Award.

Alissa Chavez

CEO of EasyFlo received a FIX Design Award to design an innovative baby bottle.

Women’s Entrepreneurship

This year’s Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Mean Business conference had the most diverse speaker lineup in program history, with 80% women of color, and the broadest reach of participants, with women joining online from nine states and three countries.
FIX has teamed with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and IBM to offer cloud credits for students and entrepreneurs in the Borderplex. AWS is the world’s most comprehensive and broadly adopted cloud platform, offering over 200 fully-featured services from data centers globally. The partnership with Amazon has allowed FIX to grant these credits to entrepreneurs, which has represented an incredible boost for their development and a soft transition from idea to product. In the last year, FIX has granted over $125,000 worth of AWS Cloud Credits to startups in the region.

CLOUD CREDITS

essGO, El Paso’s First Mobile Delivery App, was granted $25k worth of AWS

Parental Values, an app for mobile device management, was granted $25k worth of AWS

Likehuman, an Aggie Shark Tank winner, was granted $25k worth of AWS

FIX also partnered with IBM to offer up to $120,000 in cloud credits on IBM’s open and secure hybrid cloud.
Through FIX Product Design Awards, ventures in the Borderplex region receive no-cost access to product design/prototyping equipment, and to the electrical and mechanical engineering expertise that is crucial to product development. Services are provided through NMSU’s Aggie Innovation Space prototyping laboratory, which makes accessible to students, faculty, and community members technical resources and know-how to create product prototypes, hone product design, and address technical challenges.

**FIX PROTOTYPING SUPPORT**

This programming fills a critical gap in the Borderplex region, where typically, access to such services are unavailable to emerging and new businesses due to prohibitive cost.

**PROGRAMMING**

**AGGIE INNOVATION SPACE STUDENTS**

Hannah Linder and Veronica Gurrola featured below are NMSU students working at the Aggie Innovation Space and creating successful prototypes for entrepreneurs in the Borderplex.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

FIX Prototyping also enhances opportunities to expose engineering students to entrepreneurial thinking, which may help them frame their technical expertise in new ways. Such collaborations are a cornerstone of FIX programming.
This year, Arrowhead Center continued to feature programming and initiatives for assisting women entrepreneurs. FIX was the visionary host of the fifth annual WE Mean Business conference, in partnership with WESST (a statewide small business development and training organization). WE Mean Business brought together thought leaders and change-makers to share their stories, strategies, and wisdom with current and aspiring women entrepreneurs. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the conference was hosted on a 100%-virtual platform. This year’s conference had the largest attendance in event history, with 200+ online viewers for online sessions. Featured below are three of WE’s speakers.

**Anita Skipper**
Anita has over 15 years of senior level professional career experience in various areas of sales and marketing. After graduating from NMSU and earning numerous NCAA accolades, Anita played professionally overseas and for the Cleveland Rockers of the WNBA.

**Marisol Alarcón**
Marisol Alarcon is Partner at Laboratorias. She holds a BS in Business Administration from Universidad Adolfo Ibañez in Chile and a Master Degree in Public Administration and Development Practice from Columbia University in New York. She led relationships with Laboratorias’s global partners as Chief Partnerships Officer for four years and is currently the founder of their spinoff company.

**Miriam Rivera**
Miriam Rivera is CEO and Managing Director of Ulu Ventures, a top seed stage venture fund in Silicon Valley focused on IT startups. Miriam is dedicated to increasing diversity in both the entrepreneurial and investment communities. Previously, Miriam was vice-president/deputy general counsel at Google, joining as the second attorney.
FIX Product Design Awards will also be offered to selected participants of the NM Clean Energy Resilience and Growth (NM CERG) Cluster. NM CERG will establish a technology development, validation, and growth model that will create a robust pipeline of support for clean energy tech startups in NM. FIX will help NM startups evaluate, test, demonstrate and prototype their innovations.

“Arrowhead Center is excited to expand upon the work started through our DOE EPIC competition award, which was a catalyst in starting and growing a robust cluster for clean and renewable technology startups in New Mexico, with the support of our partners, we will create a pipeline of support for these startups, solidifying New Mexico’s role in the clean energy economy and support the commercialization of technologies that have global impacts. We can’t wait to get started.”

– Dana Catron, director of strategic Initiatives at Arrowhead Center and project director for NM CERG
USMCA AND DEEP VC

In the year ahead, our primary focus will be building FIX’s international business collaborations and further expanding networking opportunities and connections throughout the Borderplex. FIX is proud to announce the creation of two new programs: DEEPvc and USMCA-TIC.

The Diversity Empowerment and Education Program in Venture Capital (DEEPvc) will increase access to venture capital for underserved founders and participation in investment roles for underserved populations in the region. DEEPvc will engage and educate racial and ethnic minorities, women, and rural residents, increasing equity in the venture capital ecosystem for underserved populations.

USMCA-TIC is a development, validation, and growth model that will create a robust support pipeline for startups and small businesses looking to trade goods in North America under the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement for trade. Cluster participants will have access to programming, industry connections, and commercial and legal expertise and programming.
We would like to express our sincere thanks to the Foster De La Vega family for their continued support of FIX. Their generosity and commitment to the Borderplex region is the force behind all that we have shared in this report. Moving forward, FIX will continue to expand programming on both sides of the border, bringing the assets of this unique region together in new ways to benefit all.

– Kathy Hansen, Director and Chief Executive Officer of Arrowhead Center

LOOKING AHEAD

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