

Operation Soundstage helps veterans transition into film industry

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SANTA FE - The State of New Mexico and IATSE are offering new incentives to help military veterans and Reserve members who want to work in the state's growing film and television industry, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Feb.10.

Operation Soundstage is a pilot program that helps New Mexico military veterans and reserve members interested in transitioning into the film industry get job opportunities with production companies.

The program is administered through the Film Crew Advancement Program, part of the Job Training Incentive Program for Film & Multimedia, through a multi-agency partnership, which includes the New Mexico Film Office, the New Mexico Department of Veteran's Services, and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, in collaboration with IATSE, Local 480. Its main purpose is to increase the hiring and training of New Mexico veterans.

In her announcement at the annual Film and Television Day in Santa Fe, Lujan Grisham said Local 480 is now offering financial waivers to those wanting to enter the training program. The union will waive the \$800 initiation fee, so veterans are only responsible for a \$100 processing fee. Local 480 is also waiving the membership requirement of working 30 days in a covered craft, with some restrictions.

"Military veterans have given us so much. They have sacrificed and their families have sacrificed, and my administration will always do everything we can to assure them they are valued, recognized, and loved," Lujan Grisham said. "To that end, I am thrilled about this new program, which will help veterans who want to enter this exciting industry of film and television

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get a leg up and a foot in the door.”

Currently, potential employers are incentivized by NMFO through training reimbursements for crew members that advance their profession. As part of FCAP, this sub-program will provide a 50% reimbursement of the qualified participant’s wages to the company for up to 1,040 hours physically worked by the crew member. These funds are available for a limited number of positions.

Operation Soundstage will offer one position on each production specifically to a New Mexico veteran participating in the program.

“The film industry honors military veterans and we know they can provide an excellent pool of talent,” Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. “With this training, veterans and reserve members can gain valuable set experience and segue into more advanced industry positions, such as carpenters, electricians, sound technicians, makeup artists, costumers, and drivers.”

IATSE Local 480 represents professional film technicians working “below-the-line” on TV and movie productions in New Mexico. “Local 480 represents 99 different craft departments from construction, art, hair and makeup, wardrobe, special effects, and production accounting,” IATSE Local 480 President Liz Pecos said. “Many veterans already possess skills that would be transferable to a film job, such as an armorer, who oversees how firearms are used during a production. We look forward to helping veterans fast track into the union so they can gain access to training and support in finding the right niche for themselves in the film and television industry of New Mexico.”

For more information about the rules and benefits of joining Local 480, contact their membership coordinator, Morgan at membership@iatselocal480.com.

To learn more about participating in Operation Soundstage, contact Rochelle Bussey, Sr. Manager of Operations and Workforce Development Programs at the New Mexico Film Office by emailing rochelle@nmfilm.com or call (505) 476-5604.

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