

Conference to feature business opportunities in local film industry

Written by By Damon Scott for Finance New Mexico
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The New Mexico film industry has been an economic bright spot for the past several years, helping businesses grow and weather the recession. After state tax incentives for the industry kicked into gear in 2003, opportunities for individuals and businesses have been continually created. And industry leaders say there's still room for growth.

Nick Maniatis, director of the New Mexico Film Office, said the industry is "as strong as it's ever been," with 2017 shaping up to be the third-consecutive year of record activity — defined by overall economic impact and job creation, among other markers.

Maniatis and his staff are preparing for the 2017 Film & Media Industry Conference, which draws hundreds of people to sessions, panels and exhibitors. The conference, slated for Aug. 25 – 26 in Albuquerque, highlights the many ways individuals and businesses can be part of the growing industry.

MORE THAN ACTORS AND CREW

Karl Kirsch of O'Malley Glass is a believer. The Albuquerque business owner said he's worked hard to make connections with producers and crews over the years, and it's paid off.

Kirsch said he works with three different departments in the industry — set design, special effects and construction.

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“The industry always needs good vendors,” Kirsch said. “There are products that they use which aren’t available in New Mexico. I have those ready to go. We became vendors for a lot of specialty products. Most are glass and aluminum related.”

Maniatis, who has led the New Mexico Film Office since 2011, describes the industry’s needs in a different way.

“Think of any small village or city,” he said. “What would it need? Dry cleaners, catering and food, construction workers. Companies that don’t think they can [service the industry] more than likely can.”

For example, producers of the 2013 film Lone Ranger wanted to rent sewing machines to make costumes. When they inquired at a local company and saw people sewing, they hired the people to do the job for them.

PATH TO INCREASED REVENUE

Maniatis and Kirsch agree that a robust TV and film industry has helped New Mexico businesses increase revenue. Maniatis said one production contracted with a New Mexico lumber company to build sets — at \$1 million for a week’s work.

“And talk to any of the hotels that deal with our industry,” said Maniatis. “Hotel managers say we’ve saved them through the recession.”

Kirsch, who bought O’Malley Glass in 1990, credits his connection with the TV and film industry for an increase in revenue of 18-20 percent.

“It’s opened up business for us in other states,” he said. “We’ve supplied products to Louisiana,

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Georgia and Nevada.” The connection to other states happens when crews mention Kirsch and their previous work with him.

The NM Film & Media Industry Conference is scheduled for August 25 - 26 at the Crown Plaza Albuquerque, located at 1901 University Blvd. NE. Visit nmfilm.com/film-media-industry-conference for more information. The Aug. 25 session called “How to Do Business With the Film Industry” is free and open to the public without the need to register for the entire conference.

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