

Los Alamos County

Financial Support for Public Schools in Los Alamos

Guiding Principles

Background:

Citizens in Los Alamos place a very high value on excellent education. This includes a full continuum from grades K through 20. As such the following Guiding Principles were developed to guide the County's decision making process in the consideration of County resources that support achievement of this ideal. Furthermore, the County and Los Alamos Public Schools (LAPS) adopted the following complementary resolutions stating the following:

- INCORPORATED COUNTY OF LOS ALAMOS RESOLUTION NO. 08-14, A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT BY LOS ALAMOS COUNTY FOR LOS ALAMOS PUBLIC SCHOOLS (LAPS), adopted August 21, 2008, resolved that:
 - a. Los Alamos County will continue its partnership with the LAPS by exploring ways it can assist the LAPS in maximizing revenue for the school district; and
 - b. Los Alamos County will proactively evaluate increasing its future financial support of the LAPS capital program within appropriate legal, financial, and public policy constraints.
- The LAPS RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE LOS ALAMOS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT AND LOS ALAMOS COUNTY, adopted August 28, 2008, resolved that the LAPS:
 - a. Will aggressively develop and use our tangible resources to their greatest potential in order to secure the revenue needed to achieve our goal of being a premier school district; and
 - b. Further affirms that it must identify additional opportunities to partner with the County to secure alternative revenue for the LAPS.

Guiding Principles:

1. As the County proceeds with developing ways to provide financial support to public schools in Los Alamos, it will do so in a manner that aligns with and supports the County's adopted strategic goals and objectives.
2. To indicate that financial support of public schools in Los Alamos is a high priority, the County will consider adding a specific goal within the updated strategic plan that identifies the strategic importance.
3. Public school finances are closely controlled by State law, including the State schools funding formula. As the County proceeds with developing ways to provide financial support to public schools, it will do so in a manner that is sensitive to potential negative unintended consequences that could arise because of conflicting State law.
4. Consistent with the previous principle, Resolution No. 08-14, the LAPS Resolution, and the December 16, 2008 Joint County and LAPS Committee report, the County will focus its financial support efforts in the area of supporting public schools' projects:

- (a) which help the public schools make progress toward their goal of increasing self sufficiency;
 - (b) which focus on investments that will enhance the public schools' future operating revenues by increasing the property tax base and/or increasing the public schools lease revenues;
 - (c) which enable the public schools to generate new lease revenue from existing underutilized assets; or
 - (d) which are mutually beneficial to the County and the public schools. Support of the LAPS through cooperation on the Trinity Revitalization project is a prime example of this mutual benefit.
5. The County will include in its Long Rang Financial Plan recognition of its commitment made in these guiding principles for an overall level of financial support for preliminary and longer-term planning purposes.
 6. In its biennial budget process the County will evaluate and address actual disbursements of financial support to public schools on a "case-by-case" and "project-by-project" basis considering: a) the nature of the project, b) its alignment with overall goals and these guiding principles, and c) a current assessment of the County's fiscal ability to continue financial support.
 7. The approach established by these guiding principles recognizes that:
 - (a) the County's current fiscal ability is linked to higher GRT levels which are relatively volatile;
 - (b) this does not bind or commit future County Councils;
 - (c) this is intended as an initially limited duration initiative (FY 2010 through FY 2020) that will assist the public schools in their pursuit of greater self sufficiency and is not intended to be new annual revenue sharing in perpetuity; and
 - (d) this will not be a grant that would supplant existing public schools operating revenues.
 8. The County will take a proactive approach, in conjunction with the public schools, to actively lobby against any legislative changes to the State school funding formula that might have a negative impact on public schools' revenues and will actively support funding formulas or funding legislation which have a positive or neutral impact on public schools' revenues.