

Timothy M. Keller
State Auditor



Sanjay Bhakta, CPA, CGFM, CFE, CGMA
Deputy State Auditor

State of New Mexico
OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

For Immediate Release

September 26, 2017

Contact: Justine Freeman
505-476-3819

Auditor Keller Reports Substantial Gains in Transparency for Land Grant Funds
*21 out of 23 land grants now up-to-date on financial reports of millions of tax dollars
across New Mexico*

SANTA FE, NM – Today, State Auditor Tim Keller reported that more land grants are up-to-date with annual financial reporting than ever before. Land grants in rural areas throughout New Mexico face challenges achieving compliance with annual financial reporting requirements that can lead to losing out on capital outlay and federal funds. As a result of the Office of the State Auditor’s (OSA) efforts and community engagement and collaboration with associations, 21 out of 23 land grants are now in compliance with the Audit Act. In January 2016, only four land grants were fully compliant.

“Helping our rural communities safeguard funds has paid off for taxpayers, with the vast majority of land grants now up-to-date and transparently accounting for public money,” stated State Auditor Tim Keller. “Getting caught up on audits allows communities to get ahold of infrastructure funding that has been tied up in red tape.”

The OSA has significantly increased training and assistance to land grants in a number of ways. First, in 2016, the OSA started tracking land grants as part of its “At-Risk List” to help identify entities that are lagging behind. Secondly, the OSA provides financial assistance to support smaller entities in completing late audits. In the last three fiscal years, the OSA has awarded about \$420,000 in financial assistance to 64 small, rural entities in 19 different counties.

Two land grants remain on the At-Risk List for late audits dating back to fiscal year 2010, the Abiquiu Land Grant and the Cebolleta Land Grant in Cibola County. The Cebolleta Land Grant recently elected a new board and has started to make progress. The Cebolleta Land Grant recently submitted reports to the OSA for fiscal years 2007, 2008 and 2009 and the remaining audits are underway.

The Office of the State Auditor helps government work better by providing transparency and accountability for government spending; informing policy choices; and tackling fraud, waste and abuse. OSA is an independently elected executive agency responsible for examining the use of public dollars in New Mexico.

###