

Could Albuquerque Be The New “Hollywood”?: The Future of Film in New Mexico

“New Mexico Actors should have just as much of a chance as anybody else to be in films.”
- Dirk Norris (New Mexico Film Foundation)

PIC HERE: “NM Filming”

This year, there’s been a growing buzz deeming New Mexico as the place to be for film makers and actors. Despite the hype of “film incentives”, and Albuquerque’s welcome of soon-to-be neighbors, Netflix and NBC Universal, many people are still asking, “Why now? Why New Mexico?” The answer: Senate Bill 2: “Film Tax Credit Changes”.

Signed in March of this year, Senate Bill 2 is a state legislation that increased the yearly cap on what can be paid to film and TV productions from \$50 million to \$110 million. The bill, which became law on July 1st, now offers production companies a tax rebate of up to 25-30% on goods and service expenses for projects filmed in New Mexico. As an added bonus, these companies will receive an extra 5% rebate for projects filmed in New Mexico’s rural areas (60 miles outside of Albuquerque/Santa Fe city limits).

So, it’s no wonder our southwestern state may seem like an enchanting place for non-locals to shoot a movie. But what does this all mean for *our* film community? This week, we had the pleasure of chatting with Executive Director of [New Mexico Film Foundation](#), Dirk Norris, who offered us some insight into how these incentives may impact our local actors, filmmakers, and the future of Film in New Mexico.

VIDEO HERE:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2306wxytOk&feature=youtu.be>

Sol Academy: How do New Mexico’s film incentives affect local actors as opposed to those in LA?

Dirk Norris: I’m not sure what the benefits or incentives are in Los Angeles... But it is my understanding that there was a cap on the amount of rebate money that would be paid back based on payment to actors (that included both New Mexico actors and actors outside of the state). And there seemed to be efforts by folks to separate out the New Mexico actors hitting that cap... because it could be that one LA actor comes in, like an A-Lister, and that cap would be met just by that one person.

Sol Academy: So, LA actors could have the upper hand over our local actors?

DN: It’s a situation that needs to be addressed and I believe there are going to be discussions at the next legislative session about fine tuning Senate Bill 2, and it might be one of the issues they address. New Mexico Actors should have just as much of a chance as anybody else to be in films. Now, it’s totally understandable that productions coming to New Mexico already have their A-Listers - That’s one of the ways they get financing for the film - but, you know, there’s certainly a huge talent pool in New Mexico that should be considered for a lot of these roles.

SA: How you think we can incentivize productions to use local actors in New Mexico?

DN: The New Mexico Foundation has an annual event called the Actor's Showcase, which is meant to highlight some of the acting talent we have in the state and I would love it if some of these productions would come and ...actually see some of the talent we have. I don't know if it's at the level of the casting directors and who they're able to get ... But it certainly comes down to whether or not there's somebody who can fill the role that they have in mind and where they can find that person. And if any production spends a little more time looking in New Mexico, that would be great.

SA: Definitely! And producing more "above the line" projects to show people how big our talent pool is in New Mexico...

PIC HERE: "Desert Camera"

DN: Absolutely. And that's why I think we should be spending a lot of time building the industry from within the state and not having to depend on Hollywood coming here... So our filmmakers are hiring our actors. If we can build the industry from within, it's just a matter of trying to find investors that will invest in our filmmakers, our actors, the post production people, and the folks who live down the street.

SA: For actors new to the industry, is New Mexico a good place to build a career and find paid work in film?

DN: I think there are huge opportunities in New Mexico. I've met a number of actors that have moved to New Mexico from LA because of the potential here. I think there's a greater chance for an actor to get a job in New Mexico than there is anywhere in the country outside of LA and New York. And I think with the new governor's attitude towards film and wanting to really increase film production in New Mexico, there's a lot of potential here.

SA: Finally, do you think New Mexico actors can expect more opportunities because of these film incentives, or is this still an industry very much determined by luck?

DN: I think you have to carve your own path, but part of that development is always being ready for serendipity. I think luck plays a huge part of it, but you have to be ready to take advantage of that luck when it presents itself. So, I think it's incumbent on any actor to continue to learn how to act because I think that's a process that never stops ... and also to understand the business of acting because it is a business and you are a person for hire and should know everything about the taxes ...and all that's involved. And then to open yourself up to the universe, you know, and be ready for that opportunity when it comes along.

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Want to learn more about the future of film in New Mexico? Tune in to [Film Things with Sol Studios](#) for our [Part 2 podcast](#) featuring Dirk Norris!

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New Mexico Film Foundation - <https://www.nmfilmfoundation.org/>