

Project SEARCH New Mexico

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
2025

NEW MEXICO PROJECT SEARCH NEWSLETTER

SAVE THE DATE



A STANDING OVATION

to our brilliant Project SEARCH New Mexico graduates and the extraordinary teams who championed them through another remarkable year!

With dedication, our Project SEARCH teams have done far more than deliver competitive skills training—they've built bridges to thriving futures. They've connected interns not only to employment opportunities but to a full constellation of wrap-around supports: behavioral health services, healthcare, housing, and inclusion in the activities that spark their passions.

Because of this deep commitment, our graduates don't just step into adulthood—they soar into it, surrounded by circles of care that empower them to live lives rich with purpose, dignity, and joy.

This year, our teams pushed boundaries and expanded horizons—cultivating new internships at every site and welcoming fresh employer partners into the growing Project SEARCH family.

And the momentum continues: we are thrilled to welcome **61 new interns** across our **eight programs statewide**, and proudly celebrate the **City of Deming**, where a brand-new program will launch this July!

To every team member: thank you for lighting the way for our youth. Your passion fuels not just individual journeys, but a collective future of inclusion, empowerment, and possibility.

~Alex Rios, MPH, CESP, ACRE

Project SEARCH NM Statewide Coordinator
UNM Center for Development and Disability



July 14-18, 2025

**Project SEARCH
National
Conference**
Austin, Texas

www.projectsearch.us/conference



Check out this sneak peak of what's to come from our co-founder, **Susie Rutkowski**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrySaGUWEL0>

Upcoming Important Dates:

May 31: Regular pricing ends

June 1: Late registration pricing begins

June 20: Registration Ends

CELEBRATIONS AND GRADUATIONS

May was a month full of celebrations, happy tears, and community unity at Project SEARCH graduations across the state. Nearly 50% of this year's graduates have already secured competitive, integrated employment! Many have gone on to get their driver's licenses, moved into their own places, and enrolled in college courses. Please enjoy the below photos and videos highlighting our graduates. Click on the links under the pictures to enjoy more Project SEARCH memories from 2025.



Presbyterian Rust Medical Center Project SEARCH



Holloman Air Force Base Project SEARCH



The Hive Education Project SEARCH



Central Consolidated School District Project SEARCH



UNM Hospital Project SEARCH



Embassy Suites Project SEARCH



City of Farmington Project SEARCH



OUTSTANDING TEAM MEMBER OF THE YEAR

We would like to take this opportunity to honor David Gage for the profound impact he has made on our Project SEARCH community in his 9 and half years as our skills trainer at the Embassy Suites Project SEARCH program. David was part of the team that was responsible for the preparation and launch of our second Project SEARCH site in New Mexico. Throughout his tenure as a skills trainer, David provided compassionate, person-centered supports

to all 58 of the interns and their families who went through the Embassy Suites program during his tenure. David's unique ability to build relationships and connect with our host business staff, think outside of the box for solutions, and prioritize inclusion and personal goals of the interns has made him an invaluable member of our Project SEARCH family. He lights up the room with his big smile and contagious laughter and is one of the hardest working people we know; always putting other's before himself. In addition to his role as a skills trainer, David has dedicated his 23-year career to working with people with disabilities in other capacities such as being a DD waiver provider, inclusive employer, and community support liaison with Albuquerque Public Schools. Please join us in recognizing David for his everlasting contributions to our community!

UNMH HOSTS INNOVATIVE REVERSE JOB FAIR

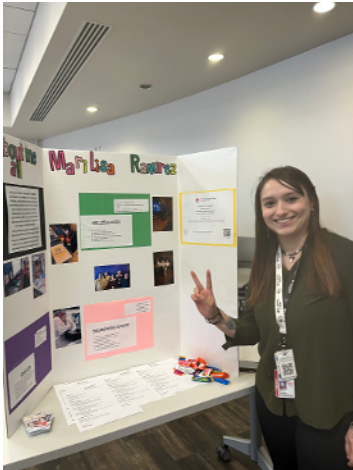
Innovation at Work!

On May 16, 2025, the incredible 2025 UNMH Project Search interns took center stage at a vibrant and inspiring **Reverse Job Fair** — and what a success it was! Each intern proudly hosted their own booth, where they dazzled attendees with their personal stories, showcased highlights from their Project Search journeys, and handed out polished resumes along with fun, personalized “trading cards.”

Visitors got a dynamic look at the interns' impressive rotations across UNMH departments such as Interventional Radiology, the Linens Department, the “BAT Cave” classroom, Rehabilitation, the BBRP Kitchen, Child Life, and more. With confidence and professionalism, every intern introduced themselves and shared their future dreams and career goals with enthusiasm.

Adding to the energy of the event, staff from DVR and Best Buddies were also present, offering valuable insights and resources. This unforgettable day was a shining example of innovation, collaboration, and empowerment.

Bravo to the entire UNMH Project Search team and especially to the interns — you rocked it! *Photos of interns: Mari, Andrik, Luis*



SKILLS ASSESSMENT DAY SUCCESS

PROJECT SEARCH TAKES OFF IN DEMING!



Morning Orientation



Interview Station



Oil Check Station



Grounds Upkeep Station

The City of Deming's Project SEARCH program marked an exciting milestone

with its very first Skills Assessment and Interview Day! It was an energizing event leading up to the program's official launch this year. With the full support of the City of Deming's leadership team and dedicated mentors, candidates explored eight interactive skills stations, each modeled after tasks from the 12 anticipated internship rotations. These included activities such as oil checks, administrative work, customer service simulations, custodial tasks, and safe handling of hazardous materials.

The day was made possible through a strong network of community partners: The Department of Workforce Solutions conducted mock interviews, PFE hosted a parent orientation, and Deming Public Schools offered essential transportation and translation support. The atmosphere was filled with anticipation and positivity as candidates demonstrated eagerness, engagement, and readiness to become part of the Project SEARCH family.

The future interns left a powerful first impression on their mentors, and the entire team is looking forward with excitement to the program's launch this fall.



Office Station

PARTNERS FOR EMPLOYMENT NEW MEXICO TRAINING ASSOCIATES



PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Complete CES and/or
have a CESP or ACRE
credential

1 year minimum
experience in the fields
of School-to-Work
Transition and/or
Supported Employment

Be available and willing
to complete 5-10 hours
per month from August
29th, 2025 until April 30th,
2026

APPLICATIONS
OPEN

For more info:
shlburton@salud.unm.edu or
avcowan@salud.unm.edu

APPLICATIONS
DUE
AUGUST 15TH
3PM



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

New Mexico Training
Associates (NMTA) is a
professional development
program for emerging
leaders throughout the
state, who want to grow
their leadership and develop
their own professional
trainings. The NMTA
program provides small
group trainings and one-on-
one mentor sessions with
staff from Partners For
Employment. Participation
in this program includes a
stipend or scholarship to
attend a national
conference.

NEW MARKETING MATERIALS



Universal Project SEARCH
New Mexico Informational
Brochure **(English)**



Universal Project SEARCH
New Mexico Informational
Brochure **(Spanish)**

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

