



# Six local businesses awarded funds to boost growth

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New companies sometimes need a boost to take their business to the next level. For six fledging area businesses, that boost comes in the form of the [Venture Acceleration Fund \(VAF\)](#), a collaborative investment administered by the [Regional Development Corporation \(RDC\)](#).

The VAF was established in 2006 by Laboratory operator Los Alamos National Security (LANS), LLC, to stimulate the economy by supporting growth-oriented companies. This year, partners who invested alongside LANS include the City of Santa Fe, Los Alamos County, New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Santa Fe County, and New Mexico Gas Company in addition to continued support from Century Bank.

“Each year the VAF application process draws more and more qualified companies,” says Kathy Keith, director of Community Partnerships at Los Alamos National Laboratory. “This year, we’re proud to support these six awardees with capital that will allow them to grow and add new jobs more quickly.”

The 2017 awardees, located in three counties in Northern New Mexico, represent a broad range of business pursuits, from food production to modular manufacturing. The selected companies are:

- [Dee Dee’s Finest Beef Jerky](#), **Española**: maker of paper-thin, crispy beef jerky. The VAF funding will be used to purchase two commercial freezers, two commercial dehydrators, and a commercial slicer, allowing the company to keep up with demand and serve a broader geographic base.
- [Extraordinary Structures](#), **Santa Fe**: manufacturer of innovative modular components that streamline the construction process and make it easy for builders and business owners to be code-compliant. VAF funding will allow for designing and testing an interior infrastructure layer and will support final testing for certification of the panelized system.
- **Length Width Height**, **Santa Fe**: an e-commerce site for customized upholstered furnishings that allows customers to design their own high-quality pieces directly on the site. VAF funding will support the completion of the custom-built website.
- **Necessity Gas**, **Edgewood**: manufacturer of industrial gas detectors that will be able to detect leaks in natural gas wells and pipelines from trucks, drones and aircraft. VAF funding will be used to reduce the cost of hardware and to invest in marketing.

- **Tall Foods/Tall Goods, Ribera:** a company bringing high-quality sustainable ostrich meat and other products (including leather, hypoallergenic feathers, and eggs) to the discerning and conscientious consumer. VAF funding will go toward development and implementation of a livestock monitoring system that will communicate the real-time condition of the livestock via personal computers and smart devices.
- **YXO, Inc., Santa Fe:** a manufacturer bridging the gap between metals and plastics with a proprietary advanced composite structure that enables structural rigidity, fatigue and impact tolerance with applications from the aerospace to sporting goods industries. VAF funds will be used for a build-out of a scalable production-level machine that will enable commercial production of their structures.

Saltbox Tiny House by Extraordinary Structures.

Extraordinary Structures CEO Zane Fisher says being awarded VAF funding is incredibly validating after a lot of hard startup work. “It’s creatively invigorating to be simultaneously challenged and supported in taking our manufacturing process to the next level,” he says. “Because of this innovative financing mechanism, we’re able to take some important steps in product development at a critical time. We’re honored to be part of an endeavor dedicated to growing businesses in New Mexico and are looking forward to being part of this expanding entrepreneurial network.”

Since 2006, the VAF program has assisted 67 New Mexico companies through marketing and technology development activities such as proof-of-concept, prototyping, developing market share, product launching or leveraging funding. The VAF award is structured as a zero-interest loan, with repayment required only if a company is acquired, leaves New Mexico within a certain timeframe or fails to provide support to the Northern New Mexico startup community.

“The Laboratory wants to support the region’s small businesses as much as possible, and the VAF plays a critical role in helping companies on a growth trajectory expand and contribute to the broader economy,” said David Pesiri, director of the Richard P. Feynman Center for Innovation at Los Alamos National Laboratory, which is responsible for the Lab’s technology transfer initiatives.

“The seed capital that VAF provides is often critical to early-stage companies, and often helps bring jobs to the area,” continues Val Alonzo, executive director of the RDC. “This year’s six VAF winners promise a lot of growth to our Northern New Mexico region.”

Dee Dee's in Española.

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