Spaceport America Releases Economic Impact Study for 2022

Economic Impact of Spaceport America, 2022 (publish date August 25, 2023)

LAS CRUCES, NM (Friday, August 25, 2023) – The New Mexico Spaceport Authority (NMSA), in partnership with the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Arrowhead Center and Center for Border Economic Development (C-BED), have released an economic impact report encompassing the 2022 calendar year for Spaceport America.

The report provides economic information regarding activities occurring due to the existence of the spaceport. Additionally, the report illustrates numerous positive impacts from customer operations and events held as a result of the existence of the spaceport.

“At its core, Spaceport America is an infrastructure-developed project designed to spur economic development, specifically in the space industry for the region. It was paid for by the state of New Mexico and Sierra and Dona Ana counties,” commented Spaceport America Executive Director Scott McLaughlin. “As such, it is incumbent upon us to show what impacts and benefits the investment has created, and whether its operations create jobs and business opportunities. This report shows that the investment is paying off, and that the counties and the state are benefiting from this long-term effort.”

“Our impact study of Spaceport America utilized a standard methodology for economic impact analysis and is based on existing operations and activities that took place in 2022,” explained Arrowhead Center program advisor and co-author of the report Dr.

Kramer Winingham. “The results are significant, showing that Spaceport America supports 548 direct jobs and 811 total jobs in New Mexico while contributing $138 million to economic output, $60 million to value added production and $46 million in labor income to New Mexico’s economy.”

NMSA plans to work with the Arrowhead Center and NMSU C-BED to produce a recurrent report on an annual basis. The year-by-year data will yield comprehensive information to better calculate the cumulative impact of the spaceport.

“It is a cliché to say, ‘space is hard’, but nothing travels to space without a spaceport. My staff and I, and the state of New Mexico, can honestly say ‘spaceporting is hard’ as well,” quipped McLaughlin. “This has been a long road requiring patience by the citizens and policy makers of New Mexico. It is also impressive that Virgin Galactic has continued their hard work and operations over the years, and now has gone to space three times this year. Their efforts, combined with those of our other tenants and numerous additional customers, are truly making a positive impact for jobs and the economy. Importantly though, we shouldn’t look at the spaceport in insolation, but should view what it does for the entire region, and how it catalyzes building a complete aerospace ecosystem.”

Seven major areas – tenant operations, tenant employment, privately-funded construction, out-of-state visitor spending, revenues, total economic impact and tax revenue impact – are detailed in the report. A brief introduction and overview of the industry is also included as is a summation of Spaceport America’s tenant base and other activities.

“We, and our partner organizations, are now calling this region ‘Space Valley’ since there are so many assets available for building the aerospace ecosystem,” McLaughlin expanded. “From Los Alamos to El Paso, the region is rich with research at federal laboratories and great universities, an increasing number of aerospace design and manufacturing companies, and a growing skilled workforce. With an FAA licensed spaceport, it can all be tied together for test, launch, and soon, reentry. Few parts of the country have all these key assets and can translate this into a culture of innovation and sustainable economic growth.”

“After meeting with tenants, we found Spaceport America has significant competitive advantages with regards to restricted airspace access, weather, and altitude that draws tenants to New Mexico who would not be here but for Spaceport America,” continued Winingham. “These are important attributes which can support further growth at Spaceport America even with the continued development of competing spaceports.”

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Spaceport America is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico, has a rocket friendly environment of 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace, low population density, a 12,000-foot by 200-foot runway, vertical launch complexes, and about 340 days of sunshine and low humidity.

Some of the most respected companies in the commercial space industry are tenants at Spaceport America: Virgin Galactic, HAPSMobile/ AeroVironment, UP Aerospace, and SpinLaunch.

The **Arrowhead Center** at New Mexico State University helps innovators, entrepreneurs, and small businesses at any stage start and grow through our services, resources, expertise, and connections. It is also the technology transfer and commercialization arm of NMSU, working with campus inventors and innovators to protect their work and ensure it reaches the broadest possible markets. While the Arrowhead Center is based at NMSU in Las Cruces, N.M., and is deeply engaged in its on-campus community, it also works with people across the state, providing advice, mentorship, education, and hands-on experiences to pioneer new technologies, businesses, and partnerships.

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