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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Bridge of Southern New Mexico Receives First Major Grant to Support Student Success and Workforce Development

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LAS CRUCES, NM – The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded a three-year, \$345,090 grant to The Bridge of Southern New Mexico to advance its work to build strong pathways that increase high school graduation rates and prepare a strong workforce for Dona Ana County.

A press conference announcing the grant, and introducing the partner organizations that will also benefit from it, takes place on Tuesday, January 3, 12.p.m. at the Hotel Encanto, during a luncheon jointly hosted by three of The Bridge's partners: MVEDA, the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, and the Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces.

The luncheon will also feature New Mexico Public Education Department Secretary-Designate Hanna Skandera and Higher Education Department Secretary Dr. Jose Garcia discussing the role of education in building a strong workforce for New Mexico.

The Bridge received the grant to expand its capacity, including the work to advance four more Early College High Schools in Dona Ana County, to reengage teachers as mentors to their students, to increase the capacity of parents to mentor their children, and to build a measurement network between the University of New Mexico's Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR), the NMSU College of

Education's Center for Research and Outreach, and the Arrowhead Center to evaluate The Bridge's impact on education, workforce preparedness and economic development.

The distribution of funds during the 2012-2014 time frame includes \$45,000 to the Enlace Program, \$45,000 each to the education research centers at UNM and NMSU, \$37,090 to the Arrowhead Center, and \$10,000 to the Service Learning Program in the NMSU College of Education. The Bridge's goal is to use its role to leverage greater resources into the county to support programs and projects that show measurable and sustainable results.

This investment represents the first national investment made into the organization that began as a business-driven conversation on how to support education in building a stronger workforce for long-term economic development for Dona Ana County. The Regional Education Initiative, launched in 2007, included broad participation from the business community working alongside education, economic development, and government, and laid the foundation for what would become The Bridge of Southern New Mexico. The Bridge is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit that continues to build the collaborations and leverage resources to increase graduation rates and optimize the county's workforce.

"Kellogg's investment in The Bridge is an investment in an amazing group of community leaders who have committed to working together, over a long period of time, to create strong pathways for students to succeed in school and into the workforce," said Tracey Bryan, president and CEO of The Bridge. "This is an investment in the future of not just these students, but the future growth of the wealth and wellbeing of the families and businesses in our community."

One of the first big outcomes from The Bridge's work is the state's first Early College High School, which is receiving statewide attention as one of the most effective and efficient education delivery systems in the state. To date, the Arrowhead Park Early College High School has not experienced a single dropout, a major feat in a county that currently sees 1 of every 3 students drop out of high school. The Bridge is currently building partnerships to support four more Early College High Schools across the county, as well as supporting the advancement of

dual credit courses to help high school students make a seamless transition through graduation and into college.

Another focus of The Bridge's current work is a business internship program that provides strong return on investment for business and a fertile learning environment for students from high school to college. Research is currently underway with the business community to evaluate their needs and then work with educational institutions to build that training into their programs.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation from Battle Creek, Michigan has taken a strong interest in helping propel vulnerable children in New Mexico forward to success. Established in 1930, the Kellogg Foundation supports children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society. In general, Kellogg's grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa. New Mexico is one of three states that are a major focus for Kellogg's efforts, and Dona Ana County is one of the counties upon which they are specifically focused. For further information on the Kellogg Foundation, visit www.wkkf.org.

Kellogg is the first national foundation to fund The Bridge, but joins a host of public and private sector organizations that have supported The Bridge since it began in 2009. Other supporters include: Las Cruces Public Schools, Dona Ana Community College, New Mexico State University, El Paso Electric, Las Cruces Machine, Pioneer Bank, Citizens Bank of Las Cruces, Advanced Care Hospital of Southern New Mexico, the NMSU College of Education, NewTec, Sunspot Solar, GenCon Construction, Jacobs Technologies, Adventure Travel, Northrise Ventures, MVEDA, the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, and Digital Solutions.

To learn more about The Bridge of Southern New Mexico, visit www.thebridgeofsnm.com.

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