



# Airport 101: A Guide for Local Leaders

## Helping You Support New Mexico's Public-Use Airports

### Welcome

Airports are more than just runways and hangars—they're lifelines for rural communities, launchpads for future careers, and engines for local economies. Whether you're a mayor, council member, county manager, or new to an airport board, this guide will help you understand how your airport works, why it matters, and how we at the Aviation Division can support you.

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## Why Airports Matter in New Mexico

New Mexico has 54 public-use airports across the state. They serve as:

- Emergency lifelines for medevac and firefighting
- Gateways for business, freight, and tourism
- Classrooms for students exploring aviation careers
- Connectors between rural communities and major cities

Every airport plays a part in our state's economy, safety, and future workforce.

### Who's Who in New Mexico Aviation

#### ● You – Local Government

Most airports in New Mexico are owned by cities or counties and tribal nations. That means you play a key role in airport oversight, funding decisions, and planning. You don't need to be an aviation expert—that's what we're here for—but your support makes all the difference.

#### ● Airport Managers


They handle the day-to-day. Everything from checking runways and fueling planes to writing grant applications. A good relationship between local leadership and your manager makes everything smoother.

### ● **The NMDOT Aviation Division (That's Us!)**

We're your partner in the skies. We provide funding, training, technical help, and inspections. We also advocate for aviation at the state level and make sure your airport stays in good standing.

### ● **The FAA**

The Federal Aviation Administration oversees safety, compliance, and most major airport grants. We work with them to help you navigate their rules and get access to federal dollars.



## **Understanding Your Airport**

Every public-use airport is a little different, but here are the basics you should know:

### **Public-Use vs. Private-Use**

- Public-Use Airports are open to anyone with a plane and meet FAA requirements. These are the ones eligible for most state and federal funding.
- Private-Use Airports serve individual owners or clubs and don't qualify for the same support.

*If your city or county owns the airport and allows general aviation access, it's a public-use airport—and it's part of our system.*

### **What's on the Ground?**

Most airports have some combination of:

- Runways and taxiways
- Aprons (parking areas for aircraft)
- Hangars and tie-downs
- Terminal or pilot lounge
- Fuel farms (for Jet A and/or 100LL)
- Weather equipment (AWOS/ASOS)

You don't need all the bells and whistles to be a valuable part of our state's aviation network.

### **Airport Layout Plan (ALP)**

Think of this as the airport's blueprint. It shows what's there now and what could be added in the future. The FAA requires an updated ALP for most funding. If yours is outdated, we'll help you fix it.

## **Sponsor Assurances**


When you accept grant money, you agree to keep the airport safe, open, and well-maintained for a set number of years. These are called "sponsor assurances." We'll help you stay on track so you don't run into funding issues later.

### **Keeping an Airport "Compliant"**

To stay in good standing with the FAA and our office, your airport should:

- Be inspected regularly (we help with that—see the 5010 section coming up!)
- Maintain a safe and obstruction-free runway
- Keep clear records of funding and maintenance
- Communicate changes (like new construction or usage)

Don't worry—this is exactly the kind of stuff our team can walk you through.



## **Funding & Grants Overview**

Keeping your airport running—and improving—isn't something local budgets should shoulder alone. Here's how funding typically works:

### **FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP)**

This is the big one. The FAA provides federal grants for:

- Runway and taxiway work
- Lighting and signage
- Navigational aids
- Environmental assessments
- Planning studies
- Terminal and apron improvements

Local governments typically provide a match ranging from 1% and 9% of the project.

Example: Roadrunner Runway Airport received \$5M to reconstruct runway 09/27.

### **State Aviation Fund (through NMDOT Aviation)**

We offer grants for smaller projects and local needs, such as:

- Fuel farm repairs
- Hangar construction
- Perimeter fencing
- Emergency maintenance
- Equipment upgrades
- Match assistance for FAA grants

These grants are competitive and based on available funding each year.

Example: Roadrunner Runway Airport received \$400K from the State Aviation Fund to install wildlife perimeter fencing.

### **Local Match**

Federal and state grants almost always require a local contribution. This can come from:

- City/county general funds
- Revenue from fuel sales or hangar leases
- In-kind work (labor/equipment) in some cases

We'll help walk you through match requirements and timelines.

### **When to Apply**

FAA grants follow a strict annual cycle, usually kicking off in the fall for the next fiscal year. State grant cycles are more flexible but still require early planning.

Want to be ready? Here's what helps:

- Keep your ALP up to date
- Prioritize needs with your airport manager
- Talk to us early—we'll help you strategize



## **Compliance & 5010 Inspections**

You might hear your airport manager (or us!) talk about a “5010 inspection.” It's a big part of keeping your airport eligible for funding—and safe for pilots.

### **What's a 5010 Inspection?**

It's an official inspection of your airport's condition and layout, named after the FAA's Form 5010. We use it to update the national airport database and keep your airport in good standing.

We check things like:

- Runway surface and markings
- Obstructions near the runway (trees, fences, signs)
- Lighting systems
- Fuel storage and signage
- Pilot facilities (like restrooms and weather info)

### **What Happens After an Inspection?**

You'll get a report showing:

- What's working great
- What needs to be fixed
- Any items that could affect your compliance or funding

Our job is to help—not penalize. We'll work with your airport manager and local team to find solutions, connect you to resources, or help with grant applications if repairs are needed.

### **How Often?**


New Mexico public use airports are inspected at least once every three years. Some are inspected more often depending on activity or project needs and to ensure that the airport remains compliant until the next official inspection.

### **What You Can Do to Help**

Even if you're not an aviation expert, your support makes a difference:

- Budget for small repairs and preventive maintenance
- Stay in the loop on inspection results
- Work closely with your airport manager and our team
- Avoid building structures near the airport without coordination (zoning matters!)

Tip: Keeping the runway clear of obstructions is one of the *cheapest* ways to stay compliant—and one of the *most important* for safety.



## **Economic & Community Impact**

Airports may seem quiet at times, but their impact is anything but small. Even the most rural airstrip plays a powerful role in supporting your local economy, public safety, and future workforce.

### **Local Economic Engine**

Airports help bring money into your community—through:

- Aircraft fueling
- Hangar rentals and leases
- Aviation-related businesses (MROs, flight schools, charters)
- Visiting pilots and passengers who spend money on food, lodging, and supplies

Example: Roadrunner Runway Airport supports 7 jobs and contributes \$322,700 to the local economy each year.

### **Emergency & Essential Services**

Your airport may be a lifeline during emergencies:

- Air ambulances and medevac flights
- Wildland firefighting operations
- Search and rescue missions
- Law enforcement operations
- Supply deliveries during natural disasters

In many towns, the airport is the fastest way in and out when it matters most.

### **Growing Tomorrow's Workforce**

Aviation and aerospace careers are growing fast—and your airport helps open that door for students:

- Hosting school field trips, aviation days, or fly-ins
- Partnering with STEM or CTE programs
- Providing a base for aviation curriculum resources, flight training resources, and drone education
- Supporting internships, job shadows, and mentorship opportunities

### **Connecting Communities**

Even if your airport doesn't have commercial service, it connects your region to the rest of the country—and the world. Whether it's a business investor checking out your town or a traveling family stopping for fuel and a green chile cheeseburger, your airport puts your community on the map.



## **Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them**

You don't have to be an aviation expert to support your airport—but a little awareness goes a long way. Here are some of the most common issues we see (and how to steer clear of them):

## **Letting the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) Lapse**

Why it matters: An outdated or missing ALP can make your airport ineligible for funding.

How to avoid it: Ask your airport manager or our Division when it was last updated. We can help with updates or planning studies.

## **Building Too Close to the Runway**

Why it matters: New construction—like fences, light poles, or buildings—can create safety hazards or violate FAA design standards.

How to avoid it: Loop us in early on any city/county planning near the airport. A quick check-in can save costly rework later.

## **Not Following Sponsor Assurances**

Why it matters: Accepting grant funding means agreeing to keep the airport open, safe, and maintained. Violating those terms (even unintentionally) can result in funding delays or penalties.

How to avoid it: Know what you've agreed to. We'll help walk through the fine print so you stay in compliance.

## **Neglecting Fuel System Maintenance**

Why it matters: Fuel farms must meet strict safety and inspection standards. A neglected system can create safety risks and lead to costly shutdowns.

How to avoid it: Schedule regular inspections and preventative maintenance. If you're not sure what's needed, ask us—we offer training and support.

## **Letting Communication Slip**

Why it matters: Many problems snowball when leadership, airport managers, and state/federal partners aren't on the same page.

How to avoid it: Keep the lines open. Set regular check-ins with your airport manager. Reach out to us early if something seems off—we're here to help.

Bottom line: Most issues aren't intentional—they come from not knowing what to watch for. That's why this guide exists. And why we're just a phone call away.



## **Resources & Contacts**

You don't have to go it alone. We're here to help—and so are plenty of great tools. Here's where to start:

## **NMDOT Aviation Division**

We're your first call for questions about funding, inspections, planning, or general airport support.

- General Line: 505-795-1401
- Email: [aviation.division@state.dot.nm.gov](mailto:aviation.division@state.dot.nm.gov)
- Website: [Aviation Division | NMDOT](#)
- Director of Aviation: Jessi Litz-Rowden
- Contact Info: [jessi.litz-rowden@dot.nm.gov](mailto:jessi.litz-rowden@dot.nm.gov)

## **Quick Resources**

- FAA Grants Info: [Insert URL to FAA AIP program]
- State Aviation Grant Guidelines: [Insert PDF or webpage]
- Sponsor Assurances Overview: [Insert link]
- Fuel System Safety Checklist: [Insert or note availability from Division]

## **Explore Your Airport System**

### [Interactive Aero Chart](#)

See every public-use airport in New Mexico with runway specs, fuel availability, and services.

## **Stay In the Loop**

We'll keep you updated through:

- Email announcements
- Grant cycle timelines
- Inspection scheduling
- Training opportunities
- Community events and success stories

If you're not receiving these updates, reach out—we'll make sure you're added to the list.