

# THE PILLARS

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## **Got Funding Lunch and Learn Financial Session**

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On April 8th, 2023, The New Mexico Office of African American Affairs (OAAA) will host a “lunch and learn” for the small business financial community. This educational economic presentation session will be at the African American Performing Arts Center, located in Albuquerque, NM. OAAA has a rich narrative from 1999 to the present. The creation of this state agency was only made possible by the extraordinary efforts of community shareholders and leaders from New Mexico Black/African American communities. The session will introduce small businesses, entrepreneurs, and interested community shareholders to a qualitative small business study by DRO Ventures LLC owner Dennis Owens. Mr. Owens will highlight the key factors that many small Black/African American start-up business owners are facing prior to seeking out, and securing, start-up capital funding. The session will connect OAAA programs/projects to activities and resources relevant to New Mexico's Black community. As a facilitator, I will use my expertise and collaborative consensus building approach to increase engagement and dialogue for economic and community development. The outcome will be to increase the role of public participatory input, and engagement in OAAA's current and future program planning.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK NEW MEXICO

The Office of African American Affairs was created as a division under the Human Services Department (HSD) with the passing of House Bill 909 in the 44th Legislature of 1999. Under Bill 909, the Office of African American Affairs, in cooperation with the Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, shall address issues relating to African Americans throughout New Mexico. In addition to Bill 909, the passing of Executive Order 00-50 in the year 2000 created the African American Affairs Advisory Committee. Both statues are associated with the governmental component of the office, and are demonstrated through the mission, vision, goals, and focus areas, also referred to as the pillars. These instruments may guide how OAAA may function, but it's community input that guides their implementation.

**Mission:** To Study, Identify, and **provide change** by means of support, advocacy, and resources relevant to the African American Communities.

**Vision:** To be a **"GO To" authority** in New Mexico on matters relating to methods that improve the quality of life for African Americans.

**Goals:** To **Improve the lives** of African American citizens in the State of New Mexico.

**Focus Areas:**

- **Advocacy and Policy**
- **Community Development**
- **Economic Development**
- **Educational Achievement**
- **Health Equity**

We understand the need to rebuild the underlying trust and commitment to community shareholders. OAAA is shifting towards a more collaborative, restorative, and consensus building practice. The session will consist of necessary conversations with community shareholders outlining barriers our community has experienced and/or anticipate when attempting to start, plan, and fund their business venture. Along with our "Getting to Know OAAA" online campaign, this will be an opportunity to meet with an experienced small business owner, learn about their success, failure, resilience, and current qualitative data about the current recommendations to address the identified barriers of time, follow-through, and primary occupations. Thus, will allow community shareholders the ability to engage, inquire, and grow their current knowledge base. We cannot do our best work without the input of New Mexico Black/African American communities. Our intention with this financial session is to re-engage with the economic and community development communities. We will focus on what is relevant to positively impact and support New Mexico's Black/African Americans of New Mexico.

The financial session is the first step for the OAAA to reimagine and apply collaborative practices to increase engagement and promote public participation/feedback. We are aware that there will be challenges, we will face them together, as a community. We hope to address some of those challenges and discuss future opportunities to explore and implement. The main topics of this financial session will be Economic Independence, Financial Capability, and Community Development. The observations, input and feedback from this financial session can later be incorporated into community-based projects and programs. The outcome will connect themes, ideals, and concerns that New Mexico Black/ African American communities can utilize to increase awareness about access to no-cost economic and/or community specific development programs.