

Colorado commission saves the day by diverting funds to keep film program rolling

Aldo Svaldi | October 18, 2019



In this Feb. 19, 2015 file photo, crew members from NBC's "The Night Shift," watch over filming of an episode at Albuquerque Studios in Albuquerque, N.M.

Colorado's seven-year-old film subsidy initiative received \$1.25 million from the state's Economic Development Commission, supplementing the program's \$750,000 budget which ran out within two months.

Beginning in 2012, the program offered a 20% rebate to film companies for production costs in the state. That has amounted to \$16 million in state expenditures, as reported in *The Denver Post*.

Proponents argue that the incentives generate corporate spending, create jobs, and have the potential to catalyze tourist hot spots, such as how the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park has taken advantage of Stephen King's book, *The Shining*.

The Stanley served as the book's inspiration, and was the filming location for the 1997 TV miniseries of the same name.

The \$1.25 million comes from the Commission's Strategic Fund, which the EDC diverted after another project went unfinished. A University of Colorado cost-benefit analysis showed a \$40 return for each dollar of investment.

"A majority of this impact has historically been in and targeted toward rural Colorado--a strategic area of economic development for Governor Polis," said CEDC's Jill McGranahan.

This infusion, however, is small compared to neighboring states' film spending. New Mexico has a budget of \$110 million for incentives and Montana provides \$10 million.

Film Production Capital, a consulting company specializing in state tax incentives for filming, rates states by the quality of their offerings. Colorado received one star, while Georgia, Massachusetts, and Louisiana each received five stars.

Rep. Jovan Melton (D-Aurora), a proponent of the subsidies, believes that Colorado's incentive program must have at least \$1 million for the state to be a viable filming location.

"When *Top Chef* was here, it was for an entire season and they constantly showed parts of the city and the state throughout the series," he said. "I went to one of the tapings and saw the dozens of crew members employed from here in Colorado and well as the rental equipment and various investment into our economy. The benefit to our state was far more than the incentive they received." ■