

El Paso Times
Opinion
Sunday, April 22, 2001

Focusing on the border
Proposed binational effort would be welcome

Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque is a new and welcome participant in the effort to improve the plight of people who live on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The high-tech research center is probably best-known for its research into advanced weaponry. But now, the lab will turn its considerable intellectual, creative, scientific and research talents toward finding solutions for health, environmental and economic problems along the border.

Scientists want to build a binational lab at Santa Teresa, N.M. From there, said Gerry Yonas, lead scientist for Sandia's Advanced Concepts Group, researchers will work on the theory that "...science and technology is the root for changing people's lives."

This is a new approach to solving border problems that should prove interesting to watch. Most traditional efforts at tackling border issues come from predictable groups of businessmen, economists and politicians.

But this initiative, called the Bi-National Sustainability Laboratory, would receive funding from both Mexico and the United States, and would be staffed with experts from both countries. And it comes at a time when the outlook for U.S.-Mexican relations is brighter than it has been for some years, and the possibility of cooperation looks good.

If all goes well, the lab should be up and running in a couple of years. All entities and countries involved are urged to expedite plans and negotiations, because the sooner it gets going, the sooner the border will feel its benefits.