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Energy research fuels new commercial technologies

New Mexico Business Weekly - by [Kevin Robinson-Avila](#) NMBW Staff

As lab-based energy research grows, lab officials, venture capitalists and businesses are working hard to get new technologies to the marketplace.

At **Sandia National Laboratories**, about a third of the commercial licenses awarded to businesses in the past couple of years have been for energy-related inventions, said Mark Allen, who oversees Sandia's Licensing and IP Management office. On average, the lab has awarded more than 100 commercial licenses each year since 2000.

"These days, energy is one of the leading areas in terms of new inventions coming out of the laboratories," Allen said. "The venture capital community is much more interested in that now. Given all the new investment in energy, I expect those licenses to increase a lot more."

Energy-related technology accounted for 31 percent of commercial licenses at **Los Alamos National Laboratory** in fiscal year 2008, the most recent year for which complete data is available, said LANL spokesman Steve Sandoval.

Both laboratories have signed numerous Cooperative Research and Development Agreements with industry to further develop emerging technologies. At LANL, 60 percent of CRADA investments went to energy-related work in FY 2008, Sandoval said.

Many solar development companies test their technologies at Sandia's solar facility. Albuquerque-based **SkyFuel** has used both Sandia's facilities and the **National Renewable Energy Laboratory** in Colorado, said SkyFuel CEO Arnold Leitner.

"It's been phenomenal for us," Leitner said. "We've gotten real support for our research."

Venture capitalists say they are closely examining energy technologies at both Sandia and LANL.

Tom Brennan, **ARCH Venture Partners'** entrepreneur-in-residence at Sandia, said he sees commercially promising energy inventions in wind, geothermal, solar and other areas.

"There's been a real increase in energy-related projects at the lab, and it's led to a whole host of technologies that are very transferrable to the market," Brennan said.

Verge Fund Managing General Partner Tom Stephenson said lab-generated inventions will impact the energy market in coming years.

"Given the emphasis on renewable energy, I believe we'll see a lot of new opportunities pop up," Stephenson said.

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