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## Gateway airport officials seek \$1.3M grant

By Tony Natale  
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A \$1.3 million enticement is expected to be sought by Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport officials to lure MD Helicopters into establishing a manufacturing plant at the rapidly growing airport.

The airport's board of directors Monday will consider a \$1.3 million grant application and, more than likely, approve its submittal to the Arizona Commerce and Economic Development Commission, said Lynn Kusy, executive director at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

"We've been working with several agencies, including Mesa's Economic Development office, to convince MD Helicopters to add a facility at our airport," said Kusy.

The grant would provide an initial investment toward an estimated \$20 million needed to build sewers, water, drainage and a runway so the helicopter company could establish another site on 100 acres at the airport.

The Mesa Economic Development office and the Mesa Chamber of Commerce teamed up with the Falcon Field Alliance to convince MD Helicopter to renew its lease agreement and retain nearly 300 employees at its 46-acre site at Falcon Field Airport until 2013.

The new lease agreement announced Tuesday will be considered by the Mesa City Council on Monday.

Kusy said the grant application for Phoenix-Mesa Gateway is the first step toward submitting additional requests for state funds that could total \$13 million. If those grants are approved, an additional \$7 million would have to come from local sources such as the city's or airport's budget, Kusy said.

Besides Falcon Field and Mesa, MD Helicopters has been negotiating with Phoenix-Mesa Gateway as well as North Texas Regional Airport in Denison, Texas; Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City and Shreveport Regional Airport in Louisiana for possible future sites. The new sites are expected to provide space for light jet manufacturing plants and other facilities, including a new 300,000-square-foot sales, manufacturing and training complex.

William Jabjiniak, Mesa economic development director, said the lease agreement at Falcon Field and the grant application for Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport are efforts to convince MD Helicopters not only to keep its headquarters in Mesa, but also to expand their operations.

