

## Utah wants new 'High School Musical 4'

TV movie » Film commission offers \$1 million to lure production here.

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Utah officials hope the makers of "High School Musical" can "Stick to the Status Quo" and film the new sequel in the state that started it all.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) Thursday offered the producers of the wildly successful Disney film series a \$1 million tax credit to lure the fourth movie back to Utah. All three previous films were shot in Salt Lake County and St. George.

The moviemakers applied for the credit through a Utah film incentive program that gives back to producers 20 percent of what the production company spends in the state while making the movie.

Just this year, the State Legislature upped the incentive from 15 percent in hopes of attracting more movie companies to shoot in Utah.

Utah Film Commission Executive Director Marshall Moore said other states are trying to attract "High School Musical 4" with offers, but he hopes Utah's bid will be enticing. "It's competitive because we have infrastructure [local film crews and equipment], and we have history with this production," he said.

The new movie, which reportedly is about a rivalry between the East High Wildcats and the West High Knights, will be made for the Disney Channel and star a new cast.

Don Schain, the Salt Lake City-based producer of the "HSM" movies, declined to comment on the production except to say that his local company, Salty Pictures, will make the movie, as it did the previous films.

In a statement Thursday, a Disney Channel spokeswoman said, "We're in the development phase of the Disney Channel Original Movie 'High School Musical East Meets West.' "

According to a GOED executive summary about the production, the filmmakers estimate as much as \$5 million could be spent in Utah during the making of the movie through equipment rentals, extras, dancers, catering, security and other services. Producers also estimate that 183 local crew members will be employed to make the movie, which is scheduled for about 30 days of filming. A start date has not been set, but filmmakers believe it will be within a year.

Several months ago, the Legislature and Gov. Jon Huntsman approved roughly \$10 million for this fiscal year to lure movie productions to the state, part of which came from Utah's share of the federal economic stimulus package. The \$1 million offered for "HSM 4" comes from that allocation.

GOED estimates that for every dollar given back to a production company from the incentive program, the production spends \$2.50 in the state.

The theatrical box-office hit "High School Musical 3" was shot in Utah for \$33 million. Of that, \$14 million was spent in Utah. To attract that production, the Utah Film Commission gave producers a special onetime \$2 million incentive.

"We're getting a lot of interest in our incentive, both from the independents and the studios," Moore said. "We're talking to a lot more clients now."

Tribune reporter **Lesley Mitchell** contributed to this story.