



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kristie Garcia
Director of Public Affairs, New Mexico Department of Agriculture
kgarcia@nmda.nmsu.edu
Office: 575-646-2804
Cell: 575-339-5011

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**NMDA's Agricultural Workforce Development Program
application period opens June 19**

Program's goal is to create opportunities that lead to careers in agriculture

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LAS CRUCES – New Mexico-based agricultural businesses may apply for internship funding through the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Agricultural Workforce Development (AWD) Program beginning June 19.

The AWD Program aims to create opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers, including students, to gain work experience in agriculture that can turn into careers and thus support New Mexico's agricultural future. The program provides incentives to New Mexico agricultural businesses to hire interns.

An "agricultural business" is defined in the New Mexico Agricultural Workforce Development Program Act as a business of food or agricultural nature, including agriculture production or processing. Examples of agricultural businesses eligible to participate in the AWD Program include – but are not limited to – farms and ranches; facilities at which raw agricultural commodities are processed into finished products; and food and beverage manufacturing facilities. The act was passed in 2019, and the pilot program ensued in 2020.

NMDA will reimburse participating agricultural businesses up to 50% of the actual cost to employ the intern(s), not to exceed \$15,000 per intern. A business may hire up to three interns in one year, and the internship must consist of at least 130 hours.

The application period opens June 19, 2023, and will continue until funds are fully allocated or by March 29, 2024, whichever comes first. Funds will be available on a first-come, first-served basis for use after July 1, 2023, and must be fully expended by May 31, 2024.

Alexis Dixon, owner of High Country Meats in Raton, said the program is a great resource to develop internships in the agriculture sector.

“As a first-time applicant, I found the program very helpful in developing new talent,” said Dixon. “The application process is easy and straightforward, and the staff is extremely friendly and helpful, guiding you through the whole process. The program helps with labor costs through the training process, and I look forward to participating in the program again.”

All payments for qualified internships will be made on a cost-reimbursable basis. The business is required to pay at least minimum wage and must carry workers’ compensation insurance for all interns. Interns must be at least 18 years of age at the start of their AWD Program internship, and it is preferred that interns are New Mexico residents, but it is not a requirement.

NMDA will not match businesses with interns. Each business is responsible for finding an intern or interns to employ and must include the interns’ information in the AWD application.

New Mexico Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte said the program benefits both individuals seeking real-life work experience and business owners.

“The food and agriculture industry is a growing and vibrant part of New Mexico’s economy,” said Witte. “This program provides an opportunity to create internships that allow individuals to gain experience, while also being beneficial to our producers and processors who need trained team members at their operations. This is a great opportunity for both those who create the internship experience and those who receive the mentorship.”

For more information about the AWD Program, please visit the [NMDA website](#), email awd@nmda.nmsu.edu or call NMDA at 575-646-2642.

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CUTLINE: New Mexico-based agricultural businesses may apply for internship funding through the New Mexico Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Workforce Development (AWD) Program beginning June 19, 2023. The goal of the AWD Program is to create opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers, including students, to gain work experience in agriculture that can turn into careers that will support New Mexico's agricultural future. Emily Willis picks pears from a tree on a farm in Los Lunas, New Mexico. (Photo courtesy of New Mexico Department of Agriculture)



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