

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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June 17, 2024

**NMDA's Agricultural Workforce Development Program
application period opens June 17**

Program to create opportunities that lead to careers in agriculture

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LAS CRUCES, N.M. – 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 17.

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 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 a participating agricultural business 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 17, 2024, and will continue until funds are fully allocated or by March 31, 2025, whichever comes first. Funds will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis for use after July 1, 2024, and must be fully expended by May 30, 2025.

“The AWD program was a beneficial asset to our company to assist in training young employees. It was an easy process to sign up and simple to submit paperwork for reimbursement. I would recommend this program for any agricultural company looking to expand their workforce,” said Troy Richardson, owner of RnM Water Solutions.

All payments for qualified internships will be made on a cost-reimbursable basis following the end of the internship. 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. It is preferred that interns be 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 is a win-win for New Mexico.

"This program not only facilitates training the next generation of agriculturalists, but it also benefits producers and manufacturers financially by allowing for the expansion of internship opportunities as well as the expansion of their own operations with training cost assistance," said Witte.

For more information about the AWD Program, please visit the [NMDA website](#), email awd@nmda.nmsu.edu or call 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 17, 2024. 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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