



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Ag businesses may apply for internship funding through NMDA's  
Agricultural Workforce Development Program**

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

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.

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 business of a 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.

New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte said it's imperative to train the next generation of agriculturists in this state.

"New Mexico has the second-highest average age of producers in the U.S. at 59.8, behind Hawaii, according to the most recent Census of Agriculture," said Witte. "Programs such as the Agricultural Workforce Development Program are key to ensuring our ag industry's future is in the hands of capable people."

NMDA will reimburse a participating agricultural business up to 50% of the actual cost to employ the intern(s), not to exceed \$5,000 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 opened Aug. 2, 2021 and will continue until funds are fully allocated

or by Dec. 7, 2021, whichever comes first. Funds will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis and must be fully expended by June 15, 2022.

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.

For more information about the AWD Program, its criteria, its requirements, allowable expenses, the application process and intern eligibility, please visit [www.nmda.nmsu.edu/agricultural-workforce-development-program](http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/agricultural-workforce-development-program), email [awd@nmda.nmsu.edu](mailto: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 Agricultural Workforce Development (AWD) Program, administered by the New Mexico Department of Agriculture. The goal of the AWD Program is to create opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to gain work experience in agriculture that can turn into careers and thus support New Mexico's agricultural future. Cache Wrye (left) and Brice Wrye (right) work on a fence on the Berkshire ranch in Estancia, New Mexico. (Photo courtesy of New Mexico Department of Agriculture)



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