



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**NMDA accepting Healthy Soil Program grant applications  
beginning February 23**

*Webinars to assist applicants set for Jan. 16, 18*

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LAS CRUCES, N.M. – The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) is accepting grant applications for its Healthy Soil Program from Friday, Feb. 23 until Friday, April 26.

NMDA will host two webinars in January to help prepare both applicant types to complete the online application for a Healthy Soil Program grant. NMDA will host a webinar for Individual Applicants Jan. 16 from 5:30 to 7 p.m., and another webinar for Eligible Entities Jan. 18 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Registration is required to attend either webinar. For related information, and to register for the webinars, visit the [NMDA website](#).

Grant funding may be used for on-the-ground projects in New Mexico that focus on one or more of the five soil health principles: keeping the soil covered; minimizing soil disturbance on cropland and minimizing external inputs; maximizing biodiversity; maintaining a living root; and integrating animals into land management, including grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects or keystone species, such as earthworms. Projects must address one or more soil health-related resource concerns, such as erosion or compaction.

NMDA welcomes applications for Healthy Soil Program grants from two types of applicants: Eligible Entities and Individual Applicants. While the application period is the same – Feb. 23 to April 26 – for each type of applicant, the application process and application materials for Eligible Entities are different from those for Individual Applicants.

Eligible Entities are defined in the 2019 Healthy Soil Act as “local governmental [entities] with proven land management capacity to support healthy soil” and include

pueblos, tribes, and nations; acequias; land grants; soil and water conservation districts; and New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service. NMDA will also accept grant applications from other local governmental entities that manage land.

Individual Applicants are non-governmental parties, including individuals, businesses and nonprofits that are directly involved in farming, ranching or another form of land management in New Mexico. Individual Applicants must complete conservation planning with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). They also must secure project sponsorship from their soil and water conservation district (SWCD) or the New Mexico pueblo, tribe, or nation of which they are a member.

"I encourage both Individual Entities and Eligible Entities in New Mexico to apply for a grant in an effort to support healthy soil in our state," said New Mexico Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte. "Since the program's pilot year in 2019, we have seen successful projects implemented in every corner of the state as a result of Healthy Soil Program grants. Please be sure to register for the webinar to learn about the application process."

All Healthy Soil Program grant applications are due by noon Friday, April 26. Applications must be completed and submitted online. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Visit the [NMDA YouTube channel to watch several videos about how the NMDA Healthy Soil Program helped various grantees improve](#) their soil health. Be sure to also explore the interactive map of past Healthy Soil Program recipients on the Healthy Soil Program [webpage](#), as well as subscribe for program updates and check out resources to prepare to apply for a grant.

The Healthy Soil Program was created in the 2019 Healthy Soil Act. The act's purpose is to promote and support farming and ranching systems and other forms of land management that increase soil organic matter, aggregate stability, microbiology and water retention to improve the state's soil health, yield and profitability.

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CUTLINE: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) is accepting grant applications for its Healthy Soil Program from Friday, Feb. 23 until Friday, April 26. Healthy Soil Program grantee Lyla Meadows planted the multi-species fall cover crop pictured above at her Luna Llena Farm in southwest Albuquerque. Meadows will soon spread compost and biochar across her farm to keep the soil covered and to boost soil organic matter. Learn more about NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants and register for an upcoming webinar: <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html>.





CUTLINE: Before Healthy Soil Program grantees begin their projects, they take soil samples to get a baseline of their soil health. Here, soil taken from a farm in Curry County undergoes an “aggregate stability” test using a glass jar, metal strainer and water. The less soil falls apart during an aggregate stability test, the more it can support plant and animal life, both big and small. Learn more about NMDA’s Healthy Soil Program grants and register for an upcoming webinar: <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html>.



CUTLINE: Hungry sheep and goats are the focal point of Graze Days in downtown Santa Fe. Using a grant from NMDA's Healthy Soil Program, the Railyard Park Conservancy brings in the grazing animals – along with compost and mulch, as well as seed to grow native grasses and wildflowers – to improve soil health in the park. Learn more about NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants and register for an upcoming webinar: <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html>.