



Change is possible when impacted communities and youth lead.

NEXTGEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

An initiative of The Semilla Project

THE SEMILLA PROJECT (TSP)

We believe the people most affected by environmental and economic injustice should lead change. The Semilla Project is a 501(c)(3) founded in 2021.

Semilla means seed, and TSP serves as a seed of healing and growth. Through land-based approaches, we cultivate leaders who advance economic, environmental, and social justice, shaping policies that strengthen communities and inspire new leaders.

PILLARS OF TSP'S WORK

- Strengthening the Justice Movement's Frontline
- Cultivating & Transforming Leaders
- Moving Policy through Civic Engagement
- Deepening Indigeneity with Land-Based Learning
- Revolutionizing Economic Development Models
- Transforming Media Narratives & Building Power

BUILDING A GREEN JOBS TALENT PIPELINE

Despite a growing green economy, historically marginalized New Mexico youth still lack paid, career-aligned pathways. Launched in 2025, NextGen creates learning opportunities in four green job tracks or career clusters. Within tracks, NextGen identifies promising careers that meet New Mexico's workforce gaps. TSP works with expert partners to develop stackable trainings, certifications, and work-based learning opportunities using a cohort model. TSP has secured \$1M+ in public investment for wages/stipends, training and credentials, wraparound supports, and county expansion and is securing philanthropic support to sustain cohorts, deepen a statewide employer network, and launch an alumni/policy council.

How NextGen is building pathways for youth statewide:

- Population Served:** Youth 18–24; NextGen is expanding from Bernalillo County to McKinley County and Doña Ana County in 2026 and 2027 (respectively).
- Tracks:** Workforce & Trades, Natural Resources, Organizing & Advocacy, Public Leadership.
- Offerings:** Paid pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, plus wraparound support for disadvantaged/rural youth.
- Goals:** 300+ NextGen participants within 3 years; 85% of each cohort transitions to jobs or higher education within 6 months.



HIGHLIGHT: PILOT COHORT FOR NATURAL RESOURCES TRACK

NextGen's first cohort began TSP's development of training in areas like forestry, agriculture, watershed care, and wildfire prevention to restore local lands. NextGen leveraged new state funds and policy to expand training and jobs with the following features.

- 🌱 **Work Based Training:** Developed 10-week paid pre-apprenticeship and linked participants to paid apprenticeships with public employers.
- 🌱 **Certifications:** Participants earned stackable credentials (Wilderness First Aid Certification and Fire Mitigation Certification).
- 🌱 **Wraparound Supports:** Provided stipends, transit, childcare, mentorship, and financial coaching assistance.
- 🌱 **Youth-Led Voice:** Youth designed projects and shaped workforce/climate policy.



PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

- ✓ Partnered with the City of Albuquerque (CABQ) and Bernalillo County (BernCo) to provide hands-on professional development in outdoor education, forestry, and agriculture.
- ✓ Completed 10-week pilot cohort in the Natural Resources Track (see right) with 18 participants.
- ✓ 90% of pilot cohort transitioned to 9-month paid apprenticeships with CABQ or BernCo.
- ✓ Finalized and implemented a comprehensive evaluation plan to inform improvements.
- ✓ Built a full curriculum framework with modules on land reciprocity, soil health, forestry, renewable energy, and professional pathways.
- ✓ Established a Regional Youth Advisory Council.

KEY PARTNERS & INVESTMENTS

City of Albuquerque | Outdoor education training
Bernalillo County | \$1 million for environmental workforce development and jobs
Commissioner Olivas (Bernalillo County) | \$160K
W.K. Kellogg Foundation | \$750K
Rockefeller Foundation | \$250K
GitLab Foundation | \$250K



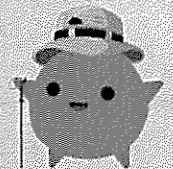
THE ROAD AHEAD FOR NEXTGEN

- 🌱 **2025** | Develop Union Trades & Just Transition Workforce Track with UA Local 412 pre-apprenticeship and contractor jobs.
- 🌱 **2026** | McKinley County expansion; for Organizing & Advocacy Track, launch cohorts in organizing and campaign leadership for roles in nonprofits, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements.
- 🌱 **2026** | Doña Ana County expansion; for Public Leadership Track, launch Candidate Recruitment Cohorts to build a pipeline for local offices, with a focus on sustainability and conservation.

Investment Opportunities

By supporting NextGen, you fund paid apprenticeships, industry credentials, and wraparound support that move historically marginalized New Mexico youth into living-wage green careers.

Contact Eli Cuna at (505) 235-8550 or eli@semillastrategies.org to discuss partnerships and support.



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