

New Mexico Department of Agriculture

FY27 Budget Presentation

Legislative Finance Committee

December 10, 2025

Jeff Witte, Director/Secretary

Les Owen, Deputy Director/Secretary

New Mexico Department of Agriculture

Established by the Constitution of the State of New Mexico

ARTICLE XV. AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION

Section 1. [Department of agriculture]

There shall be a department of agriculture which shall be under the control of the board of regents of the college of agriculture and mechanic arts; and the legislature shall provide lands and funds necessary for experimental farming and demonstrating by said department.

Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund

Established by the Legislature in 2023, New Mexico's Land of Enchantment (LOE) Legacy Fund makes annual distributions to six New Mexico state agencies for natural resource conservation programs.

NMDA allocated its share of FY26 LOE Legacy Funding (\$4.046 million) to three statutory programs:

Soil and Water Conservation District Program - \$1,231,099.00

Over \$1.3 million of LOE funding is supporting 17 grant-funded projects across 17 soil and water conservation districts. Projects include landscape-scale restoration, capacity building, conservation planning, community outreach, and education.

NMDA's Healthy Soil Program - \$1,655,917.85

NMDA using LOE distribution to leverage \$100,000 in federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) matching funds; provides grants for projects that implement soil health practices. NMDA is also collaborating with NMSU on restarting a state soil testing lab.

Noxious Weed Management Program - \$966,642.26

NMDA awarded 18 grants for local projects to control, manage and eradicate state-listed noxious weeds. In FY26, NMDA captured \$248,960 of additional federal funding and is currently running a second fall grant cycle.

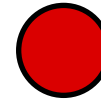
5% NMSU Administration: \$192,666.67

NMDA LOE Legacy Fund Grant Programs - FY26



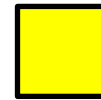
Soil & Water Conservation District
LOE Grant Projects

\$1.369m to 17 projects



Healthy Soil Program
Grant Projects

\$1.195m to 49 projects*

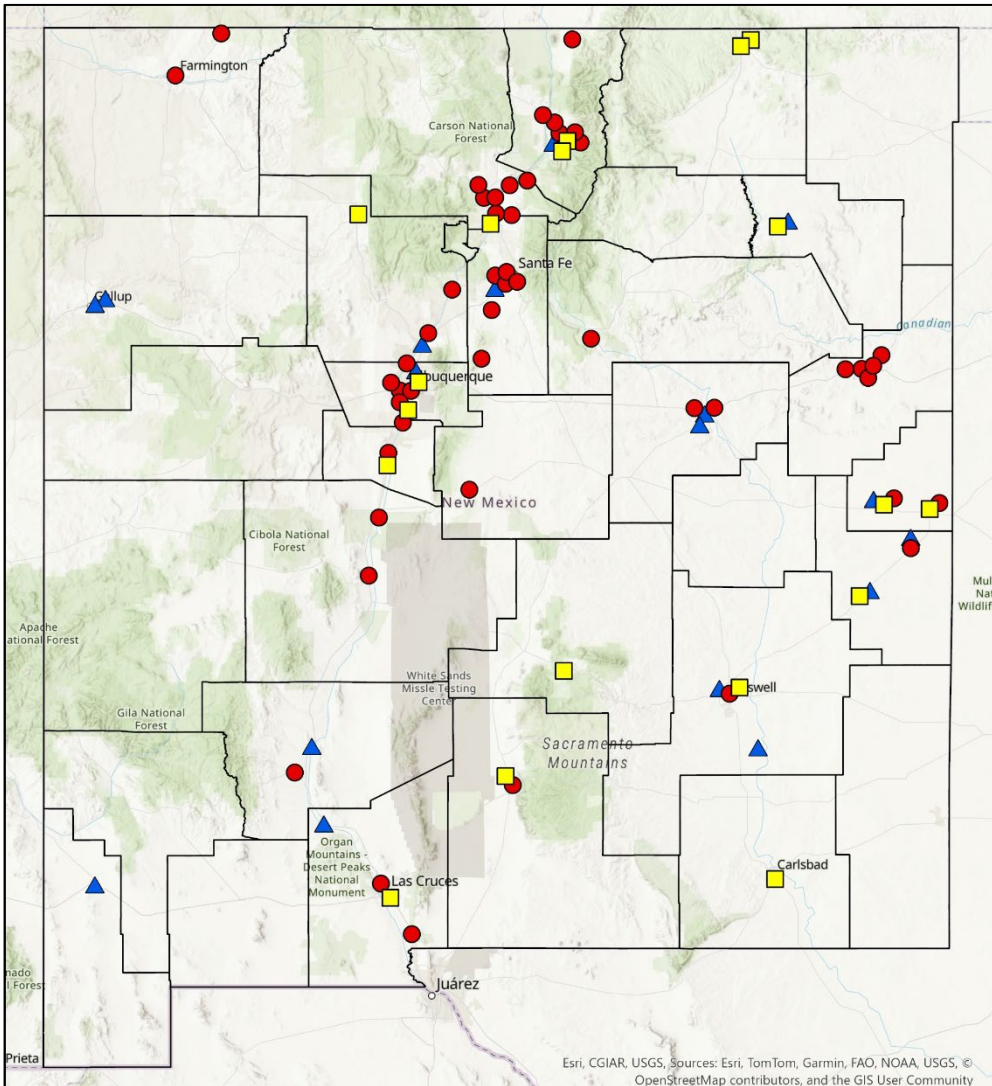


Noxious Weed Management Program
Grant Projects

\$741k to 18 projects**

*Includes funding from other state and federal sources

**Does not include upcoming Fall FY26 Grant Cycle



Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Funding Description

	FY25 Actuals	FY26 Budget	FY27 Request
State Appropriation HB2			
NMDA Operations	11,887,665	12,895,165	12,895,165
Constituent Programs	5,545,535	5,545,535	5,545,535
Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund (designated for Noxious Weeds Program, Healthy Soils Program, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts)	2,812,500	4,046,325	4,345,000**
One-Time Funding (HB2)			
NMDA	-	-	-
Constituent Programs	1,700,000	14,630,000	-
Grants and Contracts	7,884,553	8,000,000	8,000,000
Restricted Fees	6,607,847	5,600,000	5,600,000
FY27 Request (Recurring)			-
FY27 Request (Non-Recurring)			
Approved Supplier Program			430,000
Regional Farm to Food Bank Program			2,000,000

**FY27 Estimated Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund

NMDA OPERATIONS REQUESTS – FY27

COMPENSATION PARITY PROJECT

Phase 1 - Example						
NMDA	Avg-previous	Avg-current	Difference	NMED/ENMRD	Midpoint-current	Difference
NMDA Inspector, Assoc	\$40,108	\$50,266	\$10,158	Associate Env Scientist	\$69,091	\$18,825
NMDA Inspector, Inter	\$44,528	\$56,246	\$11,718	Environmental Scientist	\$83,600	\$27,354
NMDA Inspector, Sr	\$58,384	\$71,251	\$12,868	Senior Environmental Scientist	\$91,960	\$20,709
NMDA Inspector, Supv	\$67,000	\$79,268	\$12,269	Supv_ Environmental Science	\$105,754	\$26,486
Phase 2 - Example						
NMDA	Avg-previous	Avg-current	Difference	NMED/ENMRD	Midpoint-current	Difference
NMDA Ag Specialist, Assoc	\$38,732	\$50,266	\$11,533	Business Operations Specialist	\$57,099	\$6,833
NMDA Ag Specialist, Inter	\$51,082	\$58,183	\$7,101	Program Coordinator	\$71,188	\$13,005
NMDA Ag Specialist, Sr	\$61,705	\$68,804	\$7,099	Senior Program Manager	\$83,600	\$14,796
NMDA Ag Specialist, Lead	\$90,529	\$94,150	\$3,621	Supervisor_ Program Management	\$105,754	\$11,604
Planned Phase 3 - Example						
NMDA	Avg-current		DOH	Midpoint-current	Difference	
Chemist	\$51,674		Senior Chemist	\$69,090.88	\$17,416	
Vet Lab Specialist, Assoc	\$38,850		Laboratory Technician	\$42,900.00	\$4,050	
Vet Lab Specialist, Inter	\$50,130		Medical Lab Technologist	\$57,099.90	\$6,970	
Vet Lab Scientist	\$60,415		Medical Scientist	\$62,809.89	\$2,394	

We calculated midpoint comparisons of comparable state positions to administer a strategic approach for retention management and establish parity between NMDA employees and other state agency employees. Phase 1 & 2 are complete, but NMDA salaries still lag behind.

NMDA PARTNER PROGRAM PRIORITIES – FY27

Partner Requests Total \$2,430,000

NONRECURRING – REGIONAL FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM (\$2,000,000)

The Regional Farm to Food Bank (RF2FB) program strengthens New Mexico’s local and regional food systems by sourcing directly from nearby producers, with a focus on small, beginning, and veteran farmers. The funds shall be expended for the purchase of locally produced food to be distributed through food banks and nonprofit food programs serving underserved communities statewide in fiscal year 2027. All purchases will be made within the state, ensuring investments stay local while expanding food access for underserved communities.

NONRECURRING – APPROVED SUPPLIER PROGRAM (\$430,000)

Increasing demands for New Mexico agricultural products have necessitated a larger investment in the New Mexico Grown Approved Supplier Program. New Mexico Grown is a values-based local food purchasing program that provides a framework connecting institutional buyers (preschools, schools, senior centers, food banks, etc.) with local farmers and ranchers. The Approved Supplier Program (ASP) is a critical component of this framework, assuring that fresh produce, meat, and other NM-produced foods that move through schools, early childcare facilities, senior centers, and food banks are safe, traceable, and originate from a garden, farm, or ranch using sound and current food safety practices.

NMDA OPERATIONS REQUESTS – FY27

Operations Concerns

RECURRING – EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance costs have increased, and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture is seeking additional funds to cover our portion of the increase. The NM Department of Finance and Administration has estimated the additional costs at \$308,900.

RECURRING – COMPENSATION PARITY

NMDA is a state agency that falls under the Higher Education/New Mexico State University system, resulting in our employee compensation not keeping up with other state agencies. We calculated midpoint comparisons of comparable state positions to administer a strategic approach for retention management and establish parity between NMDA employees and other state agency employees. In recent budget cycles, the State Personnel Office recognized that the state was not competitive and increased salaries, further exacerbating the wage disparity for NMDA. This request also addresses compression created between team members, despite differences in skills, experience, performance, seniority, or tenure, created by starting salaries for new employees close to those of long-standing employees. Funding will also help with retention and longevity.

QUESTIONS?

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