



Celebrating New Mexico Grown!

And ... growing a movement! Over the past year, NM Grown has gained tremendous statewide momentum, and we and our partners have worked diligently to align our efforts, build awareness and excitement, highlight local successes, and establish a streamlined and consistent system for incorporating local produce into preschool, school, and senior center meals.



Our team is thrilled to have joined our fellow state agency partners and local HKHC coordinators this past fall to celebrate NM Grown innovations and successes! Together, we recognized thirteen school districts, five senior centers, and one Head Start program for their passion and commitment to strengthening New Mexico's farming economy and increasing access to fresh, healthy produce.

A statewide recognition program to acknowledge school districts and growers has existed for quite some time. But it wasn't until this last year that the program was expanded to include preschools and senior centers as well as a more holistic approach for allocating awards. Rebranded as the Golden Chile Awards, applicants are now scored on various NM Grown implementation measures, including availability and promotion of local foods, establishment of edible gardens and nutrition education, incorporation of cultural practices and traditions, and sustainability of NM Grown programming.

All applicants are awarded according to their current NM Grown efforts: Seed (showing potential), Sprout (growing strong), Blossom (reaching maturity), or Golden Chile (mature and fruitful).



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Current & Upcoming Events



Farm to Preschool
Online Learning Session
March 29th - 31st

Our Farm to Preschool team joined other state grantees for a three-day virtual gathering focused on practical and innovative ways to integrate culturally relevant foods and engage families in Farm to Preschool activities. As we enter the second year of a two-year grant cycle, our team is primarily interested in learning how we can intentionally expand and scale Farm to Preschool statewide. The learning session was hosted by the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists and supports New Mexico's comprehensive Farm to Preschool initiative, including our pilot site and mini grant programs.

Healthy Schools Spring Summit April 4th - 6th

Organized in partnership with the Public Education Department (PED), this year's Summit will be held virtually from 9-12 each day. With a strong focus on creating school environments that support healthy eating, physical activity, and social and emotional learning, we encourage our school partners to attend by registering [here](#) today.



Bike & Roll to School Day Wednesday, May 4th

Join states, communities, and schools nationwide on Wednesday, May 4th in celebration of Bike & Roll to School Day! Formerly known as Bike to School Day, the name change acknowledges inclusion and equity by encouraging all students to safely walk, bike, or roll to school and be active via whatever means they choose. While May 4th is the official day this year, schools can celebrate throughout the month of May. Visit the website for resources and to register your school: <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/>



Celebrating New Mexico Grown, cont.

Congratulations to our coordinators and school partners in the following HKHC communities for your commitment to NM Grown and the health of your students and for taking time to apply for an award!

- Clovis Municipal Schools, Sprout
- Dexter Consolidated Schools, Sprout
- Farmington Municipal Schools, Sprout
- Lordsburg Municipal Schools, Sprout
- Roswell Independent Schools, Blossom
- Socorro Municipal Schools, Sprout



Schools serving up colorful, locally grown foods for lunch!



NM Grown is continuing to gain momentum thanks in large part to recent successes and the strong and thoughtful partners who comprise the NM Grown Coalition and Interagency Task Force. The Coalition represents a network of public institutions, community-based organizations, and individuals working together to strengthen community food systems statewide by 1) providing diverse leadership through program and policy development rooted in community engagement; 2) supporting NM Grown practitioners through alignment of resources, training, and networking opportunities; and 3) advocating for systemic food system change. The coalition was expanded in 2021 to integrate the Early Care and Education sector and Farm to Preschool into broader statewide NM Grown efforts.



The Interagency Task Force is comprised of five state agency partners committed to ensuring New Mexico's nutrition programs have the capacity to source high quality, locally grown foods and make them easily accessible to our most vulnerable populations. PED, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD), and Aging and Long Term Services Department (ALTS) administer the state's nutrition programs and play a key role in shaping our food and agricultural systems. The Departments of Health and Agriculture provide guidance on program delivery and implementation. And, significantly, the Office of the Governor supports the creation of a standard system for purchasing local produce and food products across all agency nutrition programs.

In addition to a more holistic recognition program, the NM Grown Coalition and Task Force celebrated another major milestone in 2021 – the adoption of a standard procurement system across agencies and with consistent requirements for farmers and food producers seeking to sell to preschools, schools, and senior centers! This work has created opportunities for greater collaboration across agencies, nutrition program providers, and growers, and is resulting in better aligned and more efficient nutrition program delivery to ensure everyone who relies on these programs has access to high-quality, nutritious, and culturally meaningful foods.



Zuni waffle garden

We are also laying a strong foundation on which to expand NM Grown programming, including the addition of new local products, consistency in data collection, and improving access to these valuable markets for small growers and farmers of color seeking to sustain farming as a way of life now and for future generations. The Legislature and Office of the Governor strongly support NM Grown and authorized \$621,900 in grants for locally grown food in meals served to 281,000 students and 15,000 seniors in 2021-22. In fiscal year 2023, nearly \$2 million was allocated for NM Grown in preschools, schools, AND senior centers as part of the Governor's executive budget! The NM Grown Coalition will continue to advocate for recurring NM Grown funding in the executive budget and build buy-in and support for NM Grown funding in the state base budget.

Full List of 2021 Inaugural Golden Chile Awards Recipients:

<u>School districts</u>	Truth or Consequences, Sprout
Albuquerque, Blossom	West Las Vegas, Sprout
Capitan, Sprout	
Clovis, Sprout	<u>Preschools</u>
Dexter, Sprout	Family Resource Center - Deming, Sprout
Farmington, Sprout	
Hatch Valley, Sprout	<u>Senior Centers</u>
Las Vegas City, Seed	City of Las Vegas, Seed
Lordsburg, Sprout	Sandoval County, Golden Chile
Pojoaque, Seed	PMS Senior Centers - Catron, Seed
Roswell, Blossom	PMS Senior Centers - McKinley, Seed
Socorro, Sprout	PMS Senior Centers - Torrance, Seed

Apply for the 2022 Golden Chile Awards!

A new application cycle is coming up, and we encourage nutrition providers in preschools, schools, and senior centers to apply! The NM Grown Coalition is honored to recognize all who apply with a Seed, Sprout, Blossom, or Golden Chile award. We're currently working hard to make the application process easier to navigate this year, so stay tuned for additional details as well as a comprehensive timeline. We are excited to grow our recognition program and continue celebrating NM Grown successes and innovations!



Statewide Farm to Preschool Initiative Takes Off

After many months of careful planning, partnership expansion, and infrastructure and program development, our team is VERY excited to announce the long-awaited launch of our Farm to Preschool initiative! In close partnership with ECECD, our Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool coordinators, and our Farm to Preschool coordinator, Alena Paisano, we created a comprehensive and culturally relevant statewide program grounded in the following core strategies: purchasing NM grown produce for meals and snacks, growing edible gardens, incorporating nutrition education, and encouraging robust family and community engagement.



Jardin de los Niños,
Las Cruces

A community-based pilot program serves as the foundation for the majority of our Farm to Preschool efforts. Over the past several months, our team intentionally recruited eight preschools from diverse areas of the state with strong Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and US border population representation to be part of the pilot program.

With sustainability and success in mind, priority was given to preschools in communities with local farming or food hub capacity and where NM Grown grant funding was already being used by schools and senior centers. Please join us in welcoming preschools in the communities of Clovis, Dexter, Deming, Farmington, Ramah Navajo, Socorro, Sunland Park, and Torrance County! All eight pilot sites are receiving ample funding, training, and individualized support from our team to incorporate all four Farm to Preschool core strategies into their existing programming.



Cooking up berry-forward
blue corn pancakes

We also launched a statewide mini-grant program to increase capacity and interest in Farm to Preschool throughout New Mexico. The program encourages preschools to create an action plan for implementing at least one of the four core strategies. All preschools participating in the state's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) were invited to apply and were selected randomly from each of the state's five regions. Currently, 14 preschools are participating in the mini-grant program, many of which are ramping up to start their spring gardens! We plan to recruit an additional 20+ preschools this year, prioritizing those in HKHC communities.

For preschools interested in incorporating NM Grown produce, our team established a reimbursement system for the purchase of locally grown foods as well as overall Farm to Preschool expenses. Though it took significant time and work up front, this is a critical piece to sustaining Farm to Preschool and building capacity for future program expansion. We are all excited to partner with preschools on this long-awaited initiative and very much look forward to sharing successes and learning how we can equitably scale Farm to Preschool statewide!



Family Resource Center preschool
garden, Deming



New Opportunity for Preschools!



ECECD is excited to announce \$300,000 in available grant funding for the New Mexico Grown Local Produce Grant (NM Grown) for Preschools. This funding is available to all eligible early learning programs wishing to purchase local, New Mexico products to serve to their children. Eligible programs will receive a minimum of \$500, available to spend beginning July 1st. Be on the lookout for the Request for Applications (RFA) and share widely with interested preschools!

Applications open April 4th and close April 29th



Community Spotlight: Guadalupe County



Sustaining a Farmers' Market in Rural Santa Rosa

Healthy Kids Guadalupe County (HKGC) wrapped up its 8th farmers' market season in 2021, the longest run for a market in rural Santa Rosa! It's a big deal in a county where the only small grocery store receives a limited supply of produce just once a week. And if you don't arrive that day, you're usually out of luck, says JoAnn Velasquez, HKGC coordinator.

Guadalupe County is the fifth least populated county in our state, with only two people per square mile. The closest large grocery store is in Edgewood, more than an hour away. Farmers' markets have come and gone in the area, so Velasquez set a goal to operate a consistent weekly market July through October to expand her community's access to fresh, local produce and simultaneously provide a stable marketplace for growers.

Back in 2013, Velasquez connected with a local grower and the NM Farmers' Marketing Association to learn how to establish a market. She then worked with the county to secure her site and later partnered with the city when she moved the market to a more visible location in front of City Hall and near businesses that stay open later on market days.

Over the years, the market has become a steady presence in the community, expanding with new growers and more varied crops. Sally Brown began selling extra produce from her garden when she first moved to the area in 2017. Now she farms two acres for the market fulltime, offering organic food like kale, onions, asparagus, squash, pumpkins, rhubarb, jalapeños, apples, pears, basil, and huckleberries. Brown likes to use the market as an opportunity to broaden people's experience of food. She offers several varieties of tomatoes, cucumbers, and melons to tempt people to try something different and discover new favorites. Even if she arrives at the market hours before it opens, she says people are already waiting. The community's response encourages her to keep expanding, and she plans to add watermelon in the fall as well as food she's preserved.



Velasquez has been busy with her own expansion plans, recruiting more growers and hoping for an early start to the market this season. And it seems her plans will come to fruition because, in recent news, Brown agreed to take on the role of market manager this year! Her first move was to apply for the market to become an authorized Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) retailer and, soon after approval, begin offering Double Up Food Bucks for community members to purchase even more fresh, local produce! She hopes to open the market in mid-April, nearly three months earlier than in previous years.

We're excited to see how the Santa Rosa market continues to grow and thrive under new leadership and continued support from both Velasquez and Brown. Your commitment to ensuring healthy food access in Guadalupe County is so appreciated!

Earning Their Miles



When schools shut down and recreational opportunities disappeared during the height of the pandemic, Claudina Garcia was concerned about the adverse effect on children and their families. As manager of Santa Rosa Apartments, she wanted to inspire her tight-knit community to step outside and move their bodies. So, she met with JoAnn Velasquez about starting a mileage club like the one Velasquez helped get off the ground at the local elementary schools.

Together, the duo posted flyers and announced the advent of a mileage club on Facebook. Soon after, they held an outdoor meeting with residents and collected prizes like boomerangs, cooking utensils, and gardening supplies to award individuals who met their walking goals. They also painted bright blue and red footprints around the property as a walking guide. "This was a way to fill the gap in physical activity," Velasquez said. "We wanted to reach the kids, and they remembered the mileage club at school. I think they helped convince their parents and grandparents."



Over a span of five months, 23 people logged a combined total of 1,073 miles! Top walker, Becky Apodaca, clocked 147 miles followed closely by Francisco Gallegos at 145 (both pictured left). As COVID-19 significantly limited human interaction, the mileage club unified the apartment community and motivated folks to develop a healthy habit of walking regularly. "I still see residents in the morning walking the track," Garcia said. She was intentional to celebrate each accomplishment, awarding small prizes and highlighting successes in a monthly letter to residents. She hopes to initiate similar programs at other apartment communities, perhaps spurring a friendly competition!

Community Spotlight: Grant County

If you're passionate about trails and open space, Grant County is a pretty exciting place to be right now! The southwestern NM community has been hard at work creating a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation & Trail Master Plan rooted in community members' values and vision. Healthy Kids Grant County Coordinator Alicia Edwards, who has a long history of advocacy in her community, convinced the County Commission to prioritize the plan in 2018 despite many competing infrastructure and capital improvement projects. Work commenced in April 2021 with a data collection phase, and the plan is expected to be completed this spring!



The value of such a plan is tremendous – it can help the county preserve open space and attract funders for multi-modal trail projects as well as guide the community through diversifying its economy with outdoor recreation opportunities. “This sets the tone for community priorities,” Edwards said. “It says, ‘We’re going to prioritize health, physical activity, and outdoor recreation for kids and families.’ It speaks to our priorities about community wellness.” Bringing diverse voices together to establish shared community values was a critical element of the process. The County hired a progressive company that held meetings with different user groups, including motorized and non-motorized users, water-based users, hunters, anglers, and traditional recreationists.

Included in the plan is the Five Points Project, a trail with five anchor points: the Continental Divide trailhead, Silver City’s historic Water Works building, an old community school in Arenas Valley, the Bradley Hotel in Bayard, and the train station in Hurley. Crews are widening the road by the Water Works building to make it a way station for the Continental Divide trail. Ultimately the area will have tent sites, showers, and gardens for hikers and bikers. “The concept of the project is to connect really important cultural icons with multi-modal trails, gardens, outdoor classrooms for kids, and camping possibilities. It would immerse you in the culture and history of Grant County,” Edwards said. “It’s attracting a lot of interest.”

Speaking from experience, Edwards offers the following advice to HKHC coordinators who are working to create excitement and build momentum for enhancing the built environment:

- ✓ Community support is vital, and it can take years to get. Especially if the work involves a culture shift!
- ✓ Evaluate potential smaller projects as an entry point.
- ✓ Consider what the right angle is for your community – economy, preservation, recreation, health. What would make people more likely to support a project?
- ✓ Talk to your elected officials regularly about your ideas and establish a relationship.
- ✓ Be patient and don’t expect change to happen right away!

Welcoming New Coordinators in Socorro & San Ildefonso!



A warm welcome to Victoria (above) & our Socorro crew!



It’s a joy to welcome a crew of new coordinators to our eclectic mix! In San Ildefonso, we’re excited to have Victoria Martinez at the helm guiding HKHC efforts. Victoria is a San Ildefonso tribal member and is happy to be working back at home close to family. In her free time, she enjoys running and exploring near the river with her kids. She looks forward to building upon the work of previous coordinators and giving back to her community in a positive way. A little further south, Socorro rejoins our team under the able leadership of James McNeil, former HKHC Socorro County coordinator! James has since become the city’s recreation director and continues to share his passion for teaching children about healthy lifestyle behaviors as they grow into teenagers and adults. James has onboarded three team members to help co-coordinate HKHC efforts. Dezirae Armijo, a high school girls soccer and track coach, is active in the community and is a role model and advocate for healthy living. Born and raised in Socorro, Cheyenne Cortez has a farming background and is responsible for the administrative side of HKHC work. She believes children are sponges and retain more healthy habits than adults give them credit for. An avid soccer player, Carlos Benavidez is passionate about physical activity and thinks children need that outlet during their day to get the wiggles out! His creative and friendly personality has made it easier for the team to connect with different partners and spread the word about HKHC initiatives.