

Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) NMDA's Healthy Soil Program Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

- NMDA created the Healthy Soil Program in 2019 based on [the Healthy Soil Act](#).
 - Per the Healthy Soil Act, **the purpose of the Healthy Soil Program** 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 health, yield and profitability of the soils of the state.”
 - The Healthy Soil Act directs NMDA to “encourage producer, land manager, landowner and interagency **collaboration in the management of healthy soils.**”
 - The Healthy Soil Act directs NMDA to establish programs for soil assessment, education, and grants. **This fact sheet focuses on the latter component: grants.**
-

GRANT PROJECT BASICS

- The Healthy Soil Program offers **grants for on-the-ground projects that occur in New Mexico and implement one or more of the soil health principles** named in the Healthy Soil Act:
 - keeping 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
- Before an Individual Applicant can identify the soil health principle(s) their project will implement, they must **first identify the soil-specific natural resource concerns** (i.e., infiltration, compaction, erosion, etc.) **on the land where the project will be implemented.** A conservation plan (see below) will identify resource concerns and the appropriate agricultural practices and soil health principles to address them.

WHO CAN APPLY

- NMDA welcomes Healthy Soil Program grant applications from **two kinds of applicants**:
 - **An Eligible Entity (see below)** applying with its own project that will improve the land it owns or manages, or a project that will improve the land on which it partners with or advises farmers, ranchers, and other land managers.
 - **An Individual Applicant (see below)** applying with their own project that will benefit soil health on the land they manage. Such individuals must obtain a Letter of Support from a qualified Eligible Entity (see below) and complete conservation planning in order to apply.

ELIGIBLE ENTITY APPLICANTS

- **The Healthy Soil Act defines Eligible Entities** as “local governmental [entities] with proven land management capacity to support healthy soil”. Such entities include:
 - Pueblos, tribes, and nations
 - Land grants

Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23)

NMDA's Healthy Soil Program

Fact Sheet

- Acequias
 - Soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs)
 - New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service
- **Eligible Entity projects must occur on the ground**, implementing one or more of the soil health principles, based on identified resource concerns. These on-the-ground projects should include a public education/outreach component. However, projects that focus *exclusively* on education and outreach will not be considered for funding.
 - While written support from others is not required for an Eligible Entity to apply for a Healthy Soil Program grant, **letters of support are encouraged from Eligible Entities that intend to involve farmers, ranchers, and other land managers** in the project.

INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS

- Individuals, businesses, and nonprofits engaged in farming, ranching, and/or other forms of land management in New Mexico can apply for a Healthy Soil Program grant **regardless of the number of acres they manage and regardless of whether they own, lease, or manage the land**. Projects will be evaluated on their potential to improve soil health by addressing soil-specific natural resource concerns through the implementation of soil health principles and agricultural/conservation practices.
- As part of their application, **Individual Applicants must include a Letter of Support** (download the template from [NMDA's Healthy Soil Program website](#)) **completed by a qualified* Eligible Entity** that will provide both fiscal and project-performance support if the project is selected for funding. State regulations prevent NMDA and most Eligible Entity types from financially partnering directly with an individual. ***The only Eligible Entity types that can partner financially with an Individual Applicant are pueblos, tribes, and nations, as well as soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs).**
- As part of their application, **Individual Applicants must include an existing conservation plan or a conservation plan template** (download the template from [NMDA's Healthy Soil Program website](#)) developed in cooperation with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). A conservation plan identifies resource concerns (i.e., erosion, compaction, etc.), as well as the agricultural/conservation practices and soil health principles that can address those concerns.

CONSERVATION PLANNING OPPORTUNITY (for first-time Individual Applicants)

- The Conservation Planning Opportunity will **help a limited number of first-time Individual Applicants secure a conservation plan** from a certified conservation planner. This opportunity is reserved for Individual Applicants who will have **neither** a conservation plan **nor** a completed conservation planning template by the application deadline of May 12, 2022.
- The Conservation Planning Opportunity **puts first-time Individual Applicants in good position to apply for grant funding in future funding cycles** of NMDA's Healthy Soil Program.
- A Conservation Planning Opportunity is valued at approximately \$1,000. **NMDA will select and pay directly the Technical Service Provider (TSP)** who will create a conservation plan for the land managed by the person(s) who receives of the Conservation Planning Opportunity.

Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23)
NMDA's Healthy Soil Program
Fact Sheet

TIMEFRAME

- Healthy Soil Program grant-funded activities can begin no earlier than August 15, 2022, and end no later than May 31, 2023. Multi-year projects are not eligible for Healthy Soil Program grant funding.
- After grant awards are announced, Eligible Entities and Individual Applicants must attend a **mandatory training on July 21, 2022**. Eligible Entities and Individual Applicants must **complete and submit grant paperwork by August 15, 2022**. Otherwise, grantees risk forfeiting their grant award.

PROJECT BUDGETS

- **Applicants can request Healthy Soil Program grant funds at the following amounts:**
 - Eligible Entities registered via SAM.gov \$100,000.00 or less
 - Eligible Entities *not* registered via SAM.gov \$24,999.99 or less
 - Individual Applicants \$22,000.00 or less
- Under NMDA's Healthy Soil Program, **grant funds cannot be used to purchase durable goods** (i.e., tangible, nonexpendable items with a useful life of more than one year) **costing more than \$999.99**.
- **The Healthy Soil Program requires an in-kind/matching contribution of 25 percent** from the applicant, whether the applicant is an Eligible Entity or an Individual Applicant. Applicants can reach this threshold by contributing services (i.e., labor, machine-hours, etc.) and/or goods (i.e., PVC pipe for a waterline, seed gifted by a neighbor, etc.) to their project.
- Healthy Soil Program grant funds are paid on the basis of cost reimbursement, meaning that **the grantee first must purchase approved budget items, then seek reimbursement** by submitting invoices and receipts that correspond with those items.