New Mexico: A Snapshot of our Commitment to Children
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INTRODUCTION
New Mexico is full of rich histories, cultural legacies and community pride. Through our grantees’ work to provide and improve equitable opportunities for children, families and communities, their efforts are also supporting the cultural, social and governance traditions throughout the state. We strive for equity across boundaries of language, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, and national origin. Our strategies cut across the political aisle, philanthropic siloes, diverse sectors and disparate issue areas—all in service of results-driven outcomes for every child.

Children are at the heart of our collective impact—making historic and lasting change in education, health and family economic security for generations of children living in New Mexico. Decades-long commitments to children have created a movement of system and policy innovations. We see our investments within these child-centered partnerships flourishing and advancing the well-being of underserved communities. While tremendous progress has been made, we know there is more work to be done.
The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated already existing disparities, affecting many of our communities, particularly children. The Navajo Nation experienced one of the highest death rates in the entire country and lacked access to the basic human necessities of clean flowing water, food, electricity and broadband, resulting in catastrophic impacts. Indigenous traditions and languages—already on the brink of extinction—were further threatened by both the death of elders and school and Tribal closures lasting almost two years.

“When we emerge from this, our team will focus our energies on ensuring that our communities are never again this vulnerable in the face of threats to our survival, whether they be from a pandemic or climate change.”

– Cassandra Begay, Co-Founder and Director
Yee Ha’Olñii Doo – The Navajo & Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund
Immigrant communities in New Mexico found themselves at the center of the pandemic as “essential workers” in many fields, unable to access any of the federal and state relief benefits intended to support children and families. Our grantees adapted with agile solutions to address the crisis by finding innovative safeguards for their communities. As a result, they are addressing century-old systemic inequities including lack of infrastructure with programs led, owned and operated by community, for community.

The largest shares of immigrants in New Mexico’s labor force work in the following occupations:

- **Farming, Fishing, and Forestry**: 37.4%
- **Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance**: 28.7%
- **Food Preparation and Serving Related**: 23.2%

One in eight workers in the New Mexico labor force is an immigrant.

44k+ children are living with an undocumented family member.

72% of Latin American immigrants in New Mexico are from Mexico. Among other countries of origin: Philippines, Afghanistan, China, Kenya, Uganda, India, Germany and Cuba.
We have learned much from our grantees and are humbled by communities’ navigation of yet another traumatic period in our shared history. They found ways to dismantle systemic inequities and provide life-giving and life-saving necessities by coming together to support each other and to impact policy.
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OUR APPROACH

...is rooted in our DNA
Racial equity and racial healing, community engagement and leadership are essential to supporting thriving children, working families and equitable communities. This is particularly evident in New Mexico, as the state begins to address and move beyond its deep-rooted history of colonialism, immigrant tensions and racial inequities.

Our grantees and communities are dismantling policies, practices, resources, power dynamics and mindsets that form the basis for many of our communities’ most intractable problems. Persistent gaps in access to quality health care and education, employment and access to healthy food serve as just a few examples of systemic barriers hindering New Mexico’s children from achieving their fullest potential and honoring their identities.
Racial Equity and Racial Healing

Cherishing children—by honoring their identities—is at the heart of racial equity and racial healing in New Mexico. This is especially critical for Indigenous languages facing extinction. WKKF investments help to support Indigenous communities teaching children these languages and their crucial importance for passing down history, values, beliefs and their distinctive worldview. Honoring Tribal sovereignty and educational sovereignty is the foundation for these partnerships.

At the Keres Children Learning Center (KCLC) on the Pueblo of Cochiti reservation, the entire preschool curriculum is taught in Cochiti Keres, while elementary students do half of their instruction in English. Every element of their learning reflects the values and traditions of their heritage. The KCLC curriculum is centered on the Cochiti belief that every person enters the world with a gift to share—one that benefits the entire community.
Twenty-three Sovereign Nations are actively reclaiming their languages. In the process, they are regaining their right to determine the future of their children and communities.

In 2016, Mayor Tim Keller, WKKF CLN Class One fellow, launched the country’s first-ever municipal Office of Equity and Inclusion and the Office of Civil Rights at the City of Albuquerque to better address racial disparities and to achieve equity. With WKKF support, the Office of Equity and Inclusion has three liaison offices focused on collaboration and increasing equitable access to city government: Immigrant and Refugee Affairs; Native American Affairs; and Black Community Engagement. The Office of Equity and Inclusion has been instrumental in advancing racial-equity-focused policies within the city, bringing equity to all residents.
Community Engagement

Meaningful and enduring change on behalf of children requires both leadership and the active participation of community residents. In New Mexico, communities are often excluded from significant civic participation, especially historically underrepresented groups—communities of color, youth and women. To address the gap, our community engagement investments focus on supporting residents to become active agents of change, participate in all levels of civil society, organize residents and advocate for child-centered public policies to better serve the needs of all residents.

These organizations educate and train community members—specifically women leaders—to inform policymakers in public hearings on issues impacting their communities. Media organizations that report on these initiatives are also part of the foundation’s community engagement support, bringing greater awareness to issues impacting underserved communities. As a result, state and local officials have established and reformed city, state and federal laws. Additionally, with a steep national trend of decreasing numbers of local news and trusted media sources, grantees train upcoming journalists to tell stories that challenge dominant narratives and link them to impactful opportunities by growing the media ecosystem. Most recently, New Mexico InDepth partnered with ProPublica on a series entitled How We Found the School District Responsible for Much of New Mexico’s Oustsized Discipline of Native Students. As a result, New Mexico’s Governor and Attorney General are addressing the over-disciplining of Native students in New Mexico schools.

FURTHER READING

How We Found the School District Responsible for Much of New Mexico’s Oustsized Discipline of Native Students
Leadership

The WKKF Community Leadership Network is a continuation of our commitment to support local leaders and foster collaborative action toward a more equitable society. Nearly eighty leaders from New Mexico have become part of a vast network of more than 1,800 alumni, who collectively work to effect systemic change. These fellows are becoming local leaders—mayor, state legislative representatives, Speaker of the House of the New Mexico Legislature and Tribal leaders—moving us forward to justice by encouraging new pathways for collaboration and helping create sustainable solutions to community problems.
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OUR STRATEGY & IMPACT
Our strategy focuses on championing sustainable positive outcomes for children and their families in four counties—Bernalillo, Doña Ana, McKinley and San Juan—and partnering with the 23 sovereign Pueblos, Tribes and Nations statewide on child-centered and community-led strategies that strengthen leaders, systems, policies and practices. Aligned with Our Ends, we strive to advance racial equity, community engagement and leadership capacity approaches while leveraging our knowledge, resources and expertise.

Since the implementation of our current 5-year strategic plan, the New Mexico Pod has achieved the following impact:

- $34.7M: Capital raised or leveraged to support local, small businesses owned by women or people of color.
- 4.2k: Community members trained or mobilized as champions for NM children and families.
- 38.6k: New Mexican children benefited from improved access and quality of early childhood education opportunities.
- >$1M: Total increase in income and assets for all families in New Mexico combined.
Early Childhood Education

We envision an educational system that affirms the identity of every child by supporting educational sovereignty and providing quality early childhood education, strong K-12 schools and culturally competent learning that promotes home languages and diverse cultures.

Recognizing the importance of quality early learning settings to help children reach their full potential with healthy brain development, we have made significant investments to improve access and quality of early childhood education in New Mexico for the past decade. Most importantly, these investments include the development and scaling of culturally and linguistically responsive education reflective of our unique heritage and diversity, as they are crucial to the academic success of New Mexico’s children.

There are additional considerations for children who are dual language or English Language Learners, in New Mexico, where eight Native languages are spoken; one-third of children speak Spanish at home; and 16 percent of children are enrolled in English Language Learner programs. Additionally, from 1990 to 2023, the number of Hispanic/Latino children born to immigrant parents increased by 93 percent.
Raíces del Saber Xinachtli Community School is a public charter school offering a bilingual immersion program located in Southern New Mexico that serves the greater communities of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and the Colonias along the U.S. border. Ninety percent of the community’s population are economically disadvantaged and 84% identify as Hispanic. With WKKF support, the school is developing an interdisciplinary curriculum model that is experiential, participatory, bi-literate, child-centered and culturally responsive. Key components of the school’s foundation, identity formation, and community-led, Indigenous knowledge, are embedded into the curriculum every day, including ancestral food and nutrition, and bilingualism and multiculturalism.

In an ongoing effort to support Indigenous language revitalization and preservation, we continue to directly partner with Native communities’ early learning centers throughout New Mexico. In addition to supporting the Pueblos of Jemez, Cochiti, Nambe,
San Felipe and Santa Clara, in the past two years we have entered into partnerships with the Navajo Nation; Pueblos of Pojoaque and Taos; Zia; and the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apache Nations.

Public and Tribal schools in New Mexico employ language teachers certified through a tribally-run process who teach eight native languages to approximately 11 percent of New Mexico students who are Native American. Supported by our key partners, New Mexico established a law in 2022 aimed at ensuring equity, improving education for Native American students and preserving their languages and cultures by ensuring equal pay for more than 155 educators certified to teach Indigenous languages.

New Mexico has been the focus of a decades-long child-centered movement powered by parents, teachers, Tribal and community leaders, childcare advocates, nonprofits and policy experts. These groups work tirelessly to advocate for universal access to early learning for children from birth to age five, ensuring sufficient funding and implementation of a multicultural/multilingual framework, improving educator quality and increasing workforce development. We are seeing
the positive results from the landmark Yazzie/Martinez case against the State of New Mexico. Our grantee collaborative advocacy efforts resulted in the state allocating $77 million for ongoing increased minimum teacher salaries, $200 million for extended school year programs and $15 million for early literacy teaching.

Childcare providers have struggled to keep care centers fully staffed, during and after the pandemic, when they lost more than a third of their workforce. These jobs are often paid at minimum or entry-level wage rates, with high turnover as staff transition into better-paying industries.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average New Mexico family spends about seven percent of its monthly income on childcare. Poorer families on average spend four times as much compared to higher-income-earning peers, up to 35% of a single parent’s income.

With the realities of childcare needs laid bare by the pandemic, the hard work of WKKF grantees began to pay off, and children, families and childcare providers are beginning to see the positive effects of so many advocates.
In July 2020, New Mexico launched the first state agency focused on services for children from birth to age five: the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD).

ECECD created the first cabinet post focused on early childcare and education, and the first Native American deputy secretary position in the department.

In May 2022, New Mexico became the first U.S. state to offer free childcare to the majority of its residents. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham announced the state would expand its Childcare Assistance Program to 30,000 qualifying families earning up to 400% of the federal poverty level ($111,000 for a family of four).
The state also established the minimum wage for childcare workers with entry-level staff earning $15 per hour, and more experienced teachers starting at $20 per hour.

In November 2022, 70.3% of voters approved a constitutional amendment making funding for early childhood programs part of the state constitution, circumventing the end of federal relief funds that were keeping many children, parents, families and childcare centers afloat. As a result, more than 116,000 New Mexico children younger than age 5 have free access to early learning. The amendment also increased annual spending for early childhood education by almost $150 million.
Employment Equity

When parents obtain quality jobs, grow their own businesses, earn good wages, and advance their careers, they can better support their families and boost children toward long-term success.

Sustainable economic prosperity involves dismantling barriers to building wealth while promoting economic and workforce development opportunities for all New Mexicans. It is important to support access to adequate wages and work supports for those in crisis and those unable to work, and to build up small business and entrepreneurship programs that include wrap-around services.

Our current focus is on residents obtaining good or better jobs, more specifically, jobs that provide a living wage, opportunity for advancement and overall family stability in our priority counties and Tribal communities. The COVID-19 pandemic presented the most significant challenges to our employment equity strategies, causing hardships that continue today. Mandatory lockdowns and lost jobs severely impacted the small business sector and workforce training. The impact of racial inequity has been heightened, as Indigenous, Black and Brown workers fared far worse than their White counterparts. A 2021 Report on
Firms Owned by People of Color, based on a small business credit survey performed by the federal reserve banks of 12 cities around the country, found that Black- and Latino-owned firms were far less likely than their White counterparts to be approved by lenders. During the pandemic, our grantees supported their communities and preserved the gains made in the years since the Great Recession. Nusenda Credit Union, for example, modified its already co-op capital lending to be more responsive to community needs. Nusenda distrusted over $2 million in 351 character-based “Especially minority owned businesses, so many of our businesses have either been denied loans, or if they do receive loans, they received them at a rate so high that there’s nothing really left to reinvest in their business.”

Black business owners in Albuquerque have come together to make a different type of financial institution. The One Hope Financial Institution is providing technical assistance and networking opportunities to small business owners and provides loans to Black, Indigenous and other business owners of color using character-based lending—a form of lending that takes a holistic approach to approving loan applicants. In 2022, the fund awarded $300,000 to a dozen Black-owned businesses and nonprofits in Albuquerque.
loans, leveraging support from 20 community-based partners for borrowers impacted by the pandemic, allowing businesses to remain open.

For many Americans, federal benefits like expanded unemployment, stimulus checks and child tax credits were crucial during the pandemic. But those benefits weren’t available to everyone: undocumented and mixed immigration status families were often excluded from assistance or failed to receive eligible benefits. Through a grantee coalition, including New Mexico Voices for Children, the immigrant rights group Somos un Pueblo Unido, and the Oakland-based nonprofit UpTogether, a basic income pilot and study was implemented in New Mexico for families that were left out of pandemic relief policies, providing 330 undocumented or mixed immigration status families $500 per month for one year. WKKF supported post-pilot research and surveys on how cash assistance helped undocumented...
or mixed immigrant status families that led to the State allocating $21 million in COVID-19 relief funds to help more than 15,000 New Mexicans who were left out of the federal relief in 2020 and 2021.

Additionally, immigrant-rights grantees led policy advocacy efforts that were successful in passing laws that allow anyone who has the required education and training to apply for professional licensure (2020; expanded in 2021). This will allow the estimated 6,000 "DREAMERs" who call New Mexico home to pursue careers in medicine, dentistry, social work, and more, helping the state to fill jobs in professions where we have worker shortages.

Tribal-led innovations are transforming infrastructure inequities on Navajo Nation through clean energy while generating a first-of-its-kind community wealth model. Navajo Power, a public benefit corporation, works with Native-owned organizations to develop utility-scale clean energy projects and is reinvesting 80% of profits into new infrastructure and community benefits. Through a $3 million program-related investment, Navajo Power is not just creating opportunity; it is aiming
to address and alleviate decades of traumatic experiences with energy companies and is leading efforts for reprogramming and rebranding how communities interface with energy development.

Over the next decade, Navajo Power aims to deliver billions of clean energy infrastructure assets to power major markets across the U.S., with emphasis on the Southwest. A subset of this work includes bringing electricity to Navajo Nation households, where 15,000 families lack access to electricity. Navajo Power has launched a separate company, Navajo Power Home, to focus on bringing power to Navajo families directly.

Our grantmaking is centered on the factors that affect employment equity, the choices families make to increase their access to quality jobs and the resources needed to reduce employment disparities. Native-, women- and immigrant-owned and operated entrepreneurship programs are instrumental in creating pathways toward economic self-sustainability, which is critical for communities of color.
In the past five years, more than $30 million in capital has been leveraged to support entrepreneurs of color, immigrant-, women- and Tribal-owned businesses.

The successful settlement of the statewide Olivas v. Bussey lawsuit against the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions in March 2018 led to policy changes, increased staffing and improved procedures that will ensure greater protection of lower income workers from wage theft.

In January 2023, New Mexico’s minimum wage increased to $12 per hour. It’s the third and final increase dictated by a 2019 state law that gradually increased the minimum wage for private businesses from $9 per hour for more than 100,000 New Mexicans. The 2009 statewide increase alone allowed 161,000 low-wage workers to earn an additional $250 million in the first 2 years.
Through historic state tax reform—Working Families Tax Credit and the Low-Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate—led by a coalition of our grantees, children and families will be receiving $2 billion in tax credits and rebates. These improvements to the tax code will help low- and middle-income New Mexicans improve equity and increase economic opportunity for 500,000 working families.

**Successful Implementation of the State’s First-Ever Child Tax Credit Increase (2023)**

- **$600**
  - Tax credit per child for low income families
- **350k**
  - Number of children who benefited
- **$105M**
  - Total amount sent to families
- **$12M**
  - Total amount sent to Native American families
The new paid family and medical leave state law, the Healthy Workplaces Act, took effect July 1, 2022, and will extend new benefits to 50,000 workers who no longer have to decide between their paycheck and their health when they or their family members are sick.

More than 40 years of advocacy culminated early in 2023 for grantee New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty with the passage of a new law that reduces the maximum annual interest rate on small loans from 175%, one of the highest rates allowed anywhere in the nation, to 36%.
Health Equity

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

Our grantmaking looks to support specific tactics aimed at dismantling the institutional and structural oppression that have led to disparities in the social determinants of health and poor health outcomes. Our partnerships in New Mexico include an emphasis on reducing health disparities and promoting health equity through programs and services, as well as those focused on systems change to improve the health and well-being of children. The health equity strategy for New Mexico is to invest in the holistic health of the child by ensuring their physical, mental, emotional and cultural needs are met.

This dual focus draws directly from an understanding that health equity is both a process (removing economic and social obstacles to health) and an outcome (everyone has a fair and just opportunity to receive quality care). Investments must address both systems (process) and services (outcomes). The pandemic exposed many cracks in the U.S. public health system including stark racial inequities and structural racism, which are part of health care in America. New Mexico communities and grantees sprang into action to address the crisis.
In an unprecedented partnership between New Mexico’s Department of Health, Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center, Con Alma Health Foundation and the University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy, the coalition identified community projects to support equitable vaccination efforts across the state—including messaging research that supported federal efforts, culturally-centered education campaigns and vaccination access to the most remote locations in the state and Tribal communities. This partnership also looked at efforts to rebuild and reimagine new quality health support systems to reduce future racial disparity gaps in health indicators. In less than 7 months, nearly 70% percent of residents were administered the first vaccination—making New Mexico a leader in the U.S. The efforts continued with boosters and vaccinations for children. Through these efforts, and sadly the extreme loss of life, we witnessed the narrowing of racial gaps in vaccinations, particularly for Indigenous and Hispanic people.
COVID-19 also challenged home visiting programs. To ensure that New Mexico families and young children were able to access high-quality home visiting services during the public health emergency, the home visiting system transitioned from in-person appointments to remote telehealth visits. Impressively, home visiting programs enrolled 1,102 new families, with comparable outcomes to prior years’ results and benefits. Families stayed connected to home visitors and programs adhered consistently to COVID-safe practices, developing strategies to respond to families’ needs. Families were referred to a total of 31,693 family support services, the majority of which were for behavioral health services, basic needs, early intervention services, family and social support services, and nutrition supports.

### Key Implementation Measures

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<td>Funding (State &amp; Federal)</td>
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<td>$18.7m</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>3,403</td>
<td>3,816</td>
<td>4,242</td>
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<td>5,397</td>
<td>5,746</td>
<td>5,697</td>
<td>-49 (&lt;1%)</td>
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<td>4,793</td>
<td>4,613</td>
<td>5,227</td>
<td>5,799</td>
<td>6,456</td>
<td>657 (11.3%)</td>
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New Mexico Voices for Children partnered with national grantee Georgetown University Finishline to increase benefits and protections of Medicaid, particularly for children and families—including advocacy on Medicaid expansion for birthing individuals.

A coalition of grantees successfully increased postpartum Medicaid coverage from 2 months to 12 months to help mothers and their babies thrive, and also raised funds to end the Medicaid Waivers waiting list for those with disabilities (2022).

In 2021, a new law—Health Benefits for Certain Non-Citizens—makes a clarification for New Mexico, guaranteeing that county indigent programs cannot discriminate or deny care to certain immigrants. As a result, more than 90,000 immigrants are receiving healthcare benefits.
Our efforts to support access to quality, affordable and culturally relevant maternal-child health (MCH) is bearing fruit. With a long track record of investing in organizations focused on improving health care across the spectrum of parenthood—from pregnancy and childbirth to breastfeeding and working to improve health outcomes for mothers, birthing parents and babies—we are reaffirming the importance of birth justice in our maternal-child health outcomes.

Partnering with the New Mexico Research Evaluation and Learning (REAL) Team Members, we created a report—Advancing Racial Equity in Maternal-Child Health and Addressing Disparities through a Reproductive and Birth Justice Lens—that explores how community-based organizations influence the health and well-being of birthing people and their babies in New Mexico.

Local, community-based organizations ensure that birthing parents have access to healthcare, such as home visits, breastfeeding, doulas and baby-friendly hospitals. This has provided meaningful improvement in health outcomes for babies and birthing mothers, but a health gap remains for people of color in the state. Infants of color have
lower birth weights, and both infants and parents of color die more often in pregnancy, delivery and postnatal care.

The strategies outlined in the report—including home visits, breastfeeding, doulas, and baby-friendly hospitals—improve access to care. However, improved access doesn’t necessarily translate to improved quality of culturally-safe care. Several participating organizations reported that some families don’t trust hospitals and clinics based on personal experiences and are forgoing prenatal care and treatment because they lack alternatives. This is particularly true for Native, Black, and immigrant/undocumented birthing parents, who for centuries have been subjected to experimentation by the medical field and continue to be robbed of their agency in making decisions about their own health care.

Additionally, WKKF supports state-wide maternal-child health equity advocacy and education collaborations, such as Black Health New Mexico, Tewa Women United, and the Navajo Nation Breastfeeding Coalition, along with other Black and Indigenous birth workers and birth advocates, to reform the statewide Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC). As a result, all MMRC members are trained in trauma-informed care and thinking, including the trauma of racism. It also ensures that lived experience and professional diversity are taken into consideration, giving Black and Indigenous community members opportunities to serve on the MMRC and receive designation as essential members. As a direct result, eight Black and Indigenous community members have been newly appointed to its membership, which previously contained no Black members.

Another grantee, Bold Futures, also worked to help certify the Birth Center Licensure program, which helped provide reimbursement for individuals to give birth at the centers. This especially aids those living in rural areas, where health facilities are scarce and fewer birthing options are available. Passing the rural tax credit was also part of this work—ensuring healthcare workers in rural areas receive credit for providing their services, including doulas and licensed midwives.
Diné College is exploring pathways for certification of doulas on the Navajo Nation that incorporates both doula training and lactation support components. Through a pilot in partnership with Navajo Nation Breastfeeding Coalition, Indigenous-centered doula and lactation trainings with community members, health professionals and students are gathering feedback on the curriculum and academic and professional preparedness.

Black Health New Mexico is supporting a maternal and child health collaborative working to ensure the Medicaid state plan amendment is inclusive of and provides for equitable reimbursement of doulas, lactation consultants and midwives. If successful, beginning July 2024, Medicaid will begin reimbursement of doulas in New Mexico for the very first time. Their advocacy efforts have already increased the reimbursement rate for midwives to a more equitable rate.
FOOD SYSTEMS

Children and families of color living in low-income communities face significant barriers accessing healthy food—compromising their health, well-being, learning and school readiness. Several longstanding inequities contribute to this reality, also known as food deserts. Discriminatory policies have limited access to capital for farmers and entrepreneurs of color across the food system, driving generational wealth gaps. Historic and structural racism has disconnected communities from their rich cultural food traditions and agricultural history.

Farming in New Mexico began 2,500 years ago with Indigenous people and carried on through IndoHispano families. Since that time, and in spite of eras of destruction and invasion in the region, farming practices endured. By the late 1970s, as a result of land confiscation and displacement, family farms had been reduced by more than half and all but eradicated as a way of life across the state. But even stripped of their land, water and cultural touchstones, farming families have proven to be resilient stewards of the land due in large part to WKKF grantee efforts. Thousands of acres of land and water rights have been preserved though partnerships with Tribes and
Acequia communities, enabling them to continue important cultural farming traditions and provide food for New Mexico families.

The South Valley Economic Development Corporation in Albuquerque is increasing local food production in the region by supporting underserved families in creating entrepreneurial ventures, which helps to build generational wealth. Since 2020, 81 families have created new food system businesses that are still in operation today.

Investment in the New Mexico Acequia Association resulted in legal trainings and advocacy to ensure low-income farmers were not exploited by land and water grabs during the pandemic and the aftermath of the wildfires.

An equitable and sustainable food system means supporting farmers and workers across the supply chain with a living income. Farm to early care and education is a systemic approach to quality early learning, culturally and traditionally relevant nutritious food and sustainable local food systems. It also addresses a critical upstream determinant of health for children.

Our mission is to reconnect Indigenous families with our longstanding relationship between earth and parenting. We believe that there is a direct connection between
nurturing the land and nurturing our children; by understanding how to grow traditional crops and preparing them for young children we are actively dismantling systems of oppression and rebuilding indigenous foodways.

On Navajo Nation, grantee The BEN Initiative, led by the Ben family, and their sister entity Bidii Baby Foods, LLC, an agricultural cooperative, is revitalizing cultural farming and addressing the lack of access to fresh, local and traditional baby foods not available near or on Navajo Nation, where canned goods are prevalent and most of the produce in grocery stores is overpriced but damaged if it’s even available at all. An Indigenous baby food line created by farmers and new parents to increase access to traditional foods in early childhood. We envision a community where traditional indigenous foods are plentiful and accessible in early childhood and beyond.

Since 2021, Bidii Baby Foods has fed 6,000 children nationwide, and is on track to feed 10,000 more.
In New Mexico, farm to early care and education is an incredibly promising community-based solution that nurtures young children’s cognitive, physical and social-emotional development, improves community nutrition and builds local, sustainable food systems. It brings together a diverse group of community and government partners in education, health and agriculture to address systemic inequities, especially related to race and income. Increasingly, state coalitions are embracing farm to early care and education as a win-win-win strategy to improve childhood nutrition, enrich early learning environments and help local agriculture flourish.
These changes demonstrate building resilient, effective ways to get healthy food to children and families while simultaneously strengthening economic opportunities, supporting health and improving the environment.

The New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association supported the New Mexico’s Double Up Food Bucks Program, allowing 224,000 New Mexico individuals and families greater access to healthy foods while also increasing sales for 900 farmers. Combined with the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, these farmers had total sales of $2.5 million.

Farm to Table, New Mexico Appleseed and New Mexico’s Governor established a permanent policy of universal free healthy school meals. 309,000 students in the state are currently eligible to receive free and reduce priced lunches; this legislation will potentially reach an additional 70,000 students during the upcoming school year.
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LOOKING FORWARD
Since the foundation made a generational commitment to New Mexico in 2013, our named places across the state have experienced successes and challenges—significant growth and opportunities and, due to the pandemic, much uncertainty. They have consistently found ways to innovate and collaborate to provide children and families the support they need. This is rooted in the centuries-old cultural traditions of Indigenous communities that center and value children as gifts but also in the deep traditions and values of the many other diverse communities that call New Mexico home.

Our grantees embraced challenging moments—not only through their dedication to their communities and the thoughtful pivots they made in their work,
but also in securing historic investments in relief and recovery funding that supports families, businesses and communities. As we conclude our current five-year strategic plan and embark on the foundation-wide strategy refinement process, we have celebrated how our investments have helped to stabilize families and communities, and identified where opportunities exist for improving our strategy. Our future work will be influenced by the knowledge gained from past and present investments and recognition of the tremendous impact of the pandemic.

Our DNA continues to resonate as the state and entire country grapple with racial inequity and conflict. Central to our work is a focus on racial equity and racial healing that recognizes hard truths about past wrongs and addresses the present consequences of racism for our most-impacted communities. Specifically, our state's cultural history carries the impact of generational harms and continues to have a ripple effect across Indigenous communities. To that end, we are eager to begin the process of establishing a TRHT project in New Mexico in the coming year.

As we approach the next phase of our work, we are grateful to lean on the expertise from our grantees and communities. We are excited to partner with our WKKF colleagues, the new class of Community Leadership Network fellows and community leaders. This invaluable knowledge will continue to inform our grantmaking, ensuring all New Mexico children and families can thrive.
A legacy of partnerships in New Mexico