

New Mexico Grown FY2023 Meat Pilot Program Evaluation:

Impacts, Opportunities, and Recommendations

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Executive Summary

New Mexico Grown (NM Grown), the state of New Mexico's local food purchasing program, connects local farmers, ranchers, food producers, and distributors to organizations including schools, senior centers, early childcare centers, and food banks serving vulnerable populations across the state. As a result of the 2022 New Mexico legislative session, meat products, including beef, lamb/mutton, bison, and pork were introduced to NM Grown. In response, the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA) and partners developed the NM Grown Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Meat Pilot which ran from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. To participate in the **NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot**, New Mexico-based meat vendors, including producers, producer collectives, processors, food hubs, and distributors could apply to become part of the Approved Supplier Program. The Approved Supplier Program, administered by the NMFMA, is a food quality assurance program that allows state-funded buyers to purchase from approved suppliers and gives buyers confidence that food is safe and traceable, and provides buyers a live list of approved suppliers. Once on the list, participating approved supplier meat vendors could then sell eligible meat products to K-12 schools, early childhood centers, senior centers, and food banks participating in NM Grown.

Since meat products will continue to be included in NM Grown, the NMFMA and the University of New Mexico (UNM) Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation Lab (APEL) conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of the FY23 Meat Pilot in fall 2023. The purpose of the evaluation was to gain insights about what worked and what did not work during the Meat Pilot and to investigate potential ways to improve the Program moving forward. The evaluation included online surveys of FY23 Meat Pilot Program approved supplier meat vendors and NM Grown buyers and interviews and focus groups with approved suppliers, buyers, and other key stakeholders. Online surveys were also distributed to NM-based meat operations that did not participate in the Pilot to assess participation barriers. Further, FY23 purchasing data were collected from state agencies and individual buyers and suppliers to produce a meat supply chain map for the Pilot. This report presents information about NM Grown, the FY23 Meat Pilot Program, and summarizes evaluation results and recommendations.

Twenty-eight (28) approved supplier meat vendors participated in the FY23 Meat Pilot, most of which were producers (50%) or processors (21%) and located in Northern (43%) or Central (36%) New Mexico. Over half (54%) were located in rural counties and 39% identified as socially disadvantaged according to USDA's definition. Most suppliers applied to sell beef (93%) and lamb/mutton (39%); just 14% applied to sell bison and 18% applied to sell pork. In FY23, there were approximately 148 NM Grown buyers including 58 K-12 schools, 33 early childhood centers, 56 senior centers, and one food bank that was responsible for NM Grown purchasing for food banks across the state. Most buyers were located in Central (32%) or Northern (26%) New Mexico and 46% were located in rural counties. Through outreach to buyers and suppliers, the evaluation team estimated that 72% of NM Grown buyers purchased meat during the FY23 Meat Pilot. Food purchases (including meat and non-meat) during FY23 totaled approximately \$2.06 million across all NM Grown buyers; however, the exact number of suppliers who sold meat, buyers who purchased meat, and total dollars spent on meat during the Pilot Program is unknown due to gaps in availability of purchasing data.

Fourteen (14) approved supplier meat vendors (50%), 28 buyers (19%), and four (4) non-participating meat operations completed a survey evaluating the Meat Pilot. **Survey results suggest that 92% of approved suppliers and 85% of buyers were satisfied or very satisfied with the NM Grown Meat Pilot Program.** Most suppliers were satisfied or very satisfied with knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating and the application process to become an approved supplier (100%) and least satisfied with the amount of product sold during the Program (23%

dissatisfied or very dissatisfied). Most buyers were satisfied or very satisfied with the packaging (93%) and quality of meat products (92%) and least satisfied with knowledge of Program goals (19% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) and knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating (15% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied). Most buyers (89%) reported the Meat Pilot improved consumers' diet and meal quality and 100% reported the Program provided ranchers and other meat suppliers with an important economic opportunity. **Importantly, all suppliers and buyers indicated they would continue selling or purchasing meat products as part of NM Grown in the future.** The most common barrier reported for not participating was not knowing about the Program (67%), though just three non-participating operations completed this question.

In addition to surveys, five (5) individuals participated in a virtual 30-minute interview and six (6) individuals participated in one of two virtual 60-minute focus groups, representing Pilot Program buyers, approved suppliers, and other stakeholders. Qualitative data confirmed that buyers were pleased with the high-quality, locally sourced meat products that they received, especially culturally relevant options like bison and lamb/mutton. Schools in particular, however, noted budget constraints and logistical obstacles. Suppliers reported success with expanding local markets and a desire for continued growth. Both buyers and suppliers reported that expanding the number of participating suppliers, providing additional information for buyers, and facilitating more buyer-supplier networking would be helpful. Key stakeholders echoed successes mentioned by buyers and suppliers but emphasized the need for increased traceability.

Overall, evaluation results for the FY23 Meat Pilot Program were positive and resulted in these recommendations for the inclusion of meat in NM Grown moving forward:

1. Consider adding **other protein-rich products** to the NM Grown Program.
2. Consider exceptions to allow a **higher percent of K-12 schools' NM Grown budgets** to be spent on meat products – especially for smaller or more rural districts.
3. Provide **more information** about approved supplier meat vendors to buyers to ease burden of participating and promote transparency regarding vendor location, delivery information, and product details.
4. Organize **more meetings and networking** (in-person and remote) between approved suppliers and buyers to facilitate community and trust building and to boost participation.
5. Continue offering **culturally-relevant options** like bison and lamb/mutton. Prioritize the recruitment of **additional bison producers** across the state to participate in the program.
6. Increase **marketing of the NM Grown Program and awareness** to eligible ranchers, meat producers and processors that did not participate.
7. Further **explore barriers** to supplier participation, particularly among socially disadvantaged, smaller, and rural producers that may lack access to large-scale processing, storage, and infrastructure required to meet buyer needs to increase Program equity, fairness, and inclusion.
8. Operationalize and implement the **local food data portal** by the end of FY24 and promote standardized collection and reporting of purchasing data across buyer agencies.

The NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program was a success from the perspective of participating suppliers, buyers and stakeholders. As the Program expands and recommendations are addressed, NM Grown and the NMFMA have a clear opportunity to continue improving food security and diet quality in vulnerable populations across the state while also providing an important economic opportunity for ranchers and other meat suppliers.

“The concept of the program is something we heavily believe in and support. We would like to see this program continue and grow on a long-term basis.”
– Meat Pilot Supplier

“I think that [the Meat Pilot Program] has helped to make agriculture sexy again, and that’s what we got to get it to.”
–Meat Pilot Buyer

I. Background

The New Mexico Grown Program

New Mexico Grown (NM Grown) is the state of New Mexico's local food procurement program that provides resources to state agencies and food banks to purchase locally-produced food from New Mexican farmers and ranchers, food producers, food hubs, and distributors. NM Grown is part of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Food Initiative, a comprehensive commitment to building a robust food system that measurably reduces hunger and improves equitable access to nutritious, culturally meaningful foods for all New Mexicans. Over the past five (5) years, state and federal funding for NM Grown has increased from a few hundred thousand dollars per year to more than \$5 million that will be available in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. With increases in funding, NM Grown is anticipated to significantly expand throughout the state.

As the state of New Mexico's most robust local food purchasing program, NM Grown nourishes vulnerable populations with fresh, locally-produced food. Food purchased through NM Grown serves children in preschool settings, students in K-12 schools, elders at senior centers, and clients at food banks. NM Grown also rewards the state's farmers, ranchers, and other food producers with fair prices for the products they supply.

All food producers and distributors that sell to NM Grown buyers must be part of the Approved Supplier Program, a food quality assurance program that provides smaller-scale and historically underserved producers access to institutional local purchasing while also ensuring food safety, quality, and product specification requirements are met. The Approved Supplier Program allows state-funded and federally-funded buyers to purchase from approved suppliers, gives buyers confidence that food is safe and traceable, and provides buyers a live list of approved suppliers. The Approved Supplier Program asserts in promotional materials that no producer is too small, participation is free, technical assistance is available, culturally relevant food is encouraged, and food sovereignty is respected. The state of New Mexico's Approved Supplier Program is managed by the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA), a 501(c)3 organization with 30 years of experience serving local producers and communities. The NMFMA provides training and technical assistance to producers and hubs, supports their application process to the Approved Supplier Program, and provides them with links to buyers. The NMFMA also collaborates closely with buyers to ensure continuity and connectivity between supply and



**NEW MEXICO
GROWN**
APPROVED SUPPLIER PROGRAM

demand. Thus, NM Grown and the Approved Supplier Program serve both producers and consumers by providing access to high-quality, safe and nutritious foods; combating food insecurity; and strengthening local economies.

The New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program

Brief History:

As a result of the 2022 New Mexico legislative session, New Mexico-based meat products were added to NM Grown. Through roundtables and other discussions with key stakeholders held in 2022, the NMFMA and buyers determined what categories of meat and then specific types within each category to include in NM Grown. Eleven beef products (bones/marrow, brisket, chuck, flank/skirt, ground, offal, prime cuts, rib, round, shank, and stew meat), 10 bison products (brisket, chuck, flank/skirt, ground, offal, prime cuts, rib, round, shank, and stew meat), nine lamb/mutton products (flank, ground, leg, offal, fib, shank, shoulder, stew meat, and whole or primal), and 11 pork products (belly, ground, ham/rump, head/jowl/neck, hocks, loin/sirloin, offal, ribs, sausage, shoulder, and stew meat) were ultimately included.

The NMFMA also worked with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) and other key stakeholders to establish the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program which ran from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 to officially introduce the inclusion of meat products in NM Grown. Specifically, the NMFMA hosted two roundtables in FY23 that brought together ranchers, processors, industry stakeholders and NM Grown buyers; Meat Pilot Program specifications and guidelines were developed as a result.

The introduction of meat to New Mexico Grown is especially important given the significance that livestock raising, production, and sales play in the state's agricultural economy.

FY23 Meat Pilot Goals and Objectives:

The primary goal of the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program was to provide an opportunity for interested New Mexico-based ranchers, food hubs, and distributors to sell their locally-produced meat products to K-12 schools, early childhood centers, senior centers, and food banks through the NM Grown Program as Approved Suppliers, and for populations served by those institutions to have access to locally grown sources of high-quality protein.

Guidelines for Participating:

With the help of statewide stakeholders, including the NMDA, the NMFMA established guidelines for buyers and suppliers interested in participating in the FY23 Meat Pilot. A live list of currently approved NM Grown buyers and suppliers [can be found here](#).

For the FY23 Meat Pilot, suppliers that were eligible to participate included New Mexico-based producers, producer collectives, processors, food hubs, or distributors seeking to sell allowable NM Grown meat products (beef, bison, lamb/mutton, pork) to NM Grown buyers (early childhood education, K-12 schools, senior centers, and food banks). All interested suppliers completed an application to be accepted into the Approved Supplier Program. Criteria for acceptance and

requirements to participate in the Meat Pilot Program are listed in Box 1. Once accepted into the Approved Supplier Program, vendors received tailored assistance and support from the NMFMA staff and partners.

Box 1. Approved Supplier Criteria and Requirements for the FY23 Meat Pilot Program

To meet food safety and product specification requirements, vendors must:

- Attest that the meat products they plan to sell meet 3 out of the 4 of the following criteria to be considered locally grown:
 1. Animal was born/raised in New Mexico
 2. Animal was fed/finished in New Mexico
 3. Animal was slaughtered/processed in New Mexico
 4. Animal ownership was maintained by a New Mexico producer
- Product must have been slaughtered and processed at a Federal or State (future) Inspected Facility, and vendor must attest to all three of the following:
 - Product must be in its original packaging with the USDA FSIS inspection stamp on the packaging from the USDA FSIS inspected processor.
 - No further processing is allowed without further USDA FSIS inspection
 - Vendor will provide buyers proof of FSIS certification (packaging, invoice, etc.) alongside a corresponding invoice for administering agency reimbursement.
- Vendor must ensure the safe transportation of product to the end market, which facilitates food safety and quality management throughout the cold-chain distribution process. Specifically, the vendor must ensure that acceptable temperature ranges have been maintained, depending on whether the meat is transported in a fresh or frozen state in temperature-controlled trucks. Frozen meat should stay frozen and fresh meat should be held at a temperature of 41°F or below.
- Vendor is required to hold a current USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Distribution License. Providing documentation of having applied to FSIS for a registration number is part of the application process, and for a vendor to become approved they must provide their FSIS registration number.
- Vendor must be bonded.
 - Processors and distributors must hold product liability insurance at a minimum of 1 million dollars.
 - In the case of individual producers who are engaged in direct marketing, product liability insurance is required. If not engaged in direct marketing it's highly encouraged.
 - Appropriate documentation will be submitted as part of the application process.
- Vendor must participate in the no-cost NMDA Taste the Tradition/Grown with Tradition Logo Program. License agreement must be completed and submitted to NMDA.

Meat Pilot buyers included early childhood centers, K-12 schools, senior centers, and food banks and markets that participated in NM Grown in FY23. Buyers could only purchase from meat vendors on the Approved Supplier Program list. NM Grown state agency buyers (K-12 schools, early childhood centers, and senior centers) could spend up to 40% of their NM Grown budgets on meat purchases; food banks did not have a limit on the amount eligible for spending on meat products. There were no other guidelines for NM Grown buyers to participate in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program.

Meat Pilot Participant Recruitment:



**NEW MEXICO
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LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT PROGRAM

**FY2023
MEAT PILOT**

**JOIN THE GROWING MOVEMENT
TO KEEP NEW MEXICO MEAT
SERVED TO OUR KIDS, SENIORS,
AND OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.**

Become an Approved Supplier!

The NMFMA led the recruitment of vendors for the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Outreach, networking and recruitment were conducted at the 2023 Annual Buyer-Grower meeting, which was held virtually in February 2023. Another networking event, titled “New Mexico Grown: Ranch-to-Institutional Market Summit”, was held on May 10, 2023 in Albuquerque and had an attendance of approximately 83 people including representatives from 13 suppliers, two state agencies representing senior centers and early childhood centers, regional food banks, and a variety of K-12 schools.

Additionally, the NMFMA website included FY23 Meat Pilot Program information on the homepage and on the Approved Supplier Program landing page. In late July-early August 2022, the NMFMA emailed approximately 50 New Mexico-based individual producers, processors, ranchers, and food hubs directly and posted general Meat Pilot Program information to their distribution list. The NMFMA distribution list included 1,140 recipients:

458 opened the email, and 42 clicked on the FY23 application form. Recruitment materials were also distributed via several industry groups and non-profits that work with livestock producers including the New Mexico Acequia Association, the New Mexico Beef Council, and the Southwest Grassfed Livestock Alliance, among others.

Marketing material for the Meat Pilot stated, “Suppliers can expect competitive prices” and, “You set the price; buyers will do their best to meet your needs.” Recruitment materials also included information about the Regional Farm to Food Bank pilot program, which is the federal funding source for food banks to purchase locally sourced meat and other food products, designed to serve socially disadvantaged producers and communities in need. The initial deadline to apply as a vendor for the FY23 Meat Pilot Program was August 5, 2022. Applications were also accepted after the initial deadline and reviewed by the NMFMA on a rolling basis.

Buyers were not specifically recruited since NM Grown already had a robust group of participating K-12 schools and school districts, early childhood centers, senior centers, and food banks across the state.

Meat Pilot Program Participation in FY23:

Twenty-nine vendors representing all 33 New Mexico counties submitted applications to serve as an approved supplier in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Of those, 28 (97%) met Program requirements and were approved and participated in the Program as “approved supplier meat vendors.” representing 14 producers (50%), 6 processors (21%), 5 food hubs

Box 2. The USDA defines a **Socially Disadvantaged Producer** as a producer who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (1).

(18%), 3 distributors (11%), and 2 producer collectives (7%) (Table 1). Two identified as more than one supplier type (producer/processor and processor/distributor). More than half (n=15, 54%) were based in rural counties. In applications, 11 (46% of producers and 39% of all applicants) identified as socially disadvantaged producers while 17 (61%) did not identify as socially disadvantaged producers or indicated they were not producers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture definition of socially disadvantaged producer is included in Box 2 (1).

Table 1 also shows the distribution of meat products suppliers applied to sell during the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Beef was most commonly listed on supplier applications (n=26, 93%), followed by lamb/mutton (n=11, 39%), then pork (n=5, 18%). Bison was listed on just four (14%) supplier applications, all four of which were processors or distributors, and half of which were located in Albuquerque.

Table 1. FY23 Meat Pilot approved supplier meat vendors (n=28)

	n (%) ^a	Beef n (%)	Lamb/ mutton n (%)	Pork n (%)	Bison n (%)	SDP ^b n (%)	Rural n (%)
All Suppliers	28 (100)	26 (93)	11 (39)	5 (18)	4 (14)	11 (39)	15 (54)
Producers	14 (50)	13 (93)	3 (21)	2 (14)	0 (0)	7 (50)	8 (57)
Processors	6 (21)	5 (83)	4 (67)	1 (17)	2 (33)	3 (50)	5 (83)
Food hubs ^c	5 (18)	5 (100)	2 (40)	1 (20)	0 (0)	1 (20)	2 (40)
Distributors	3 (11)	2 (67)	3 (100)	1 (33)	2 (67)	1 (33)	1 (33)
Producer collectives	2 (7)	2 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (50)	1 (50)

^aSuppliers could choose more than one option when indicating operation type.

^bSDP: Socially Disadvantaged Producer [self-identified, according to USDA definition (Box 2)]

^cFood hubs were defined as a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distributions, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.

In FY23, there were approximately 148 NM Grown buyers including 58 K-12 school districts and schools, 33 early childhood centers, 22 senior service providers representing 56 senior centers, and one food bank that was responsible for NM Grown purchasing for food banks across the state. Nearly half (46%) of buyers were located in counties considered rural. Total NM Grown food purchases (including all meat and non-meat purchased) during FY23 included: \$1.1 million by schools; \$530,000 by senior centers; just under \$175,000 by early childhood centers; and just over \$260,000 by food banks which totaled approximately \$2.06 million across all NM Grown buyers. The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) reported participating senior centers spent \$234,840 on meat in FY23 and food banks reported spending \$166,528. Purchasing data from the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) were

unavailable. PED did report that NM Grown allocations for meat for FY23 totaled \$480,000 for K-12 schools; however, the actual amount spent is unknown. Through outreach to individual buyers, the evaluation team found approximately 72% of NM Grown buyers purchased meat products through the FY23 Meat Pilot Program¹.

II. New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program Evaluation

Since NM Grown will continue including New Mexico-sourced meat products in FY24 and beyond, the NMFMA commissioned an evaluation of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program from the perspective of approved supplier meat vendors, buyers, and other stakeholders, as well as meat operations in New Mexico that did **not** participate in the Pilot. The University of New Mexico (UNM) College of Population Health (COPH) Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation Lab (APEL), led by Dr. Francisco Soto Mas, was selected to conduct the evaluation in fall 2023.

Evaluation Purpose and Aims

The NMFMA stated the evaluation purpose in the Request for Proposals (RFP): “*to gain insights about what worked and what did not work during the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program and to investigate potential ways to improve the program moving forward.*” Once APEL was selected as the lead evaluator, the NMFMA and APEL collaborated to develop specific goals and objectives for the four-month, mixed-methods evaluation.

Final evaluation goals included 1) creating NM Grown supply chain maps for beef, bison, lamb/mutton and pork; 2) engaging buyers, approved supplier meat vendors, and other stakeholders to evaluate the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program, and 3) engaging buyers, approved supplier meat vendors, and other stakeholders to identify growth opportunities for the NM Grown meat program moving forward. The evaluation team also reached out to meat operations in New Mexico that did not participate in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program to assess barriers to participating.

III. Evaluation Methods

The NMFMA and APEL partnered to develop a Meat Pilot Program evaluation framework and plan (Appendix A), evaluation methods, and evaluation data collection instruments (Appendix B). The UNM Health Sciences Center (HSC) Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) reviewed and approved this evaluation as an “exempt” project (HRRC# 23-387).

Meat Supply Chain Mapping

One goal of the evaluation was to create a supply chain map for included meat products (beef, lamb/mutton, pork, bison). Food supply chains are complex systems including production, distribution, processing, and consumption and depend on a number of factors, including

¹ The evaluation team could not reach 47 of the 148 FY23 NM Grown buyers. Of the 101 buyers contacted, 28 reported not purchasing meat. Thus, the calculation that 72% (73 of 101) of NM Grown buyers purchased meat during the FY23 Pilot is an approximation.

production locations, population centers and density, and storage and transportation infrastructures (2). Mapping a supply chain can yield valuable information detailing the movement of food through these complex chains. Importantly, meat processors, distributors, and food hubs were eligible to participate in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program, in addition to producers like ranchers and other livestock producers that are responsible for raising, breeding, and growing animals. While processors, distributors, and hubs may not raise animals, they are critical to the overall meat supply chain since producers may not have the capacity to process and distribute their products to the end consumer. Therefore, mapping the meat supply chain during the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program was meant to illustrate the flow of NM Grown meat products from supplier to buyer including by type of supplier, type of buyer, geographic location, and socially disadvantaged status. In addition to other evaluation data, the supply chain map could also shed light on how equity, inclusion, and fairness were or were not present during the Meat Pilot Program. It is also important to note that the mapping was not able to show the individual producers that processors, distributors, and hubs sourced from; moreover, the flow of meat products between any of the participating suppliers was not captured in this particular evaluation, but these types of connections could yield important insights in future evaluations or more in-depth supply chain studies, particularly related to overall NM Grown meat supply chain transparency, capacity, and infrastructure.

To generate a supply chain map for the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program, approved suppliers and participating buyers were classified by several variables. Suppliers were classified by geographic location (Central, Northern, Northwestern, Southern/Southwestern, or Eastern New Mexico), rural/urban status, and socially disadvantaged status (yes or no/not applicable). Buyers were classified as follows: K-12 schools were classified by geographic location and rural/urban status and type (school district, individual school, or tribal school); early childhood centers were classified by geographic location and rural/urban status and type (sponsored, individual, or tribal center; and center type); senior centers were classified by geographic location and rural/urban status and type (city-run, county-run, tribal, or individual center); and food banks were classified by geographic location only.

The evaluation team initially planned to rely on the NMFMA FY23 Approved Supplier list which included approved supplier meat vendors and buyers by type and location, plus detailed meat purchasing data from state agencies and food banks to create supply chain maps for the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. In fall 2023, the evaluation team reached out to PED for K-12 schools, ALTSD for senior centers, ECECD for early childhood centers, and the participating food bank to request and obtain purchasing data; however, the meat purchasing data for FY23 that we were able to obtain was limited, as noted in the Supply Chain Mapping Results section on page 14. As a result, the evaluation team conducted outreach to individual buyers to obtain data on which suppliers each buyer purchased from. Suppliers were also contacted individually to inquire about buyers sold to in FY23. Outreach was partially successful, so the resulting supply chain map provides a very useful albeit incomplete snapshot, as a fully complete supply chain map could not be produced since some buyers and suppliers could not be reached.

Buyer and Vendor Surveys

Quantitative evaluation data were collected through REDCap surveys distributed to at least one contact at all FY23 buyers and approved supplier meat vendors. Participants were informed their participation was voluntary and data were collected anonymously. Participants first read a consent form and indicated consent to participate. Surveys then included screening questions assessing the following inclusion criteria: at least 18 years of age and involved in their organization or operation's participation in the Meat Pilot for at least six (6) months during FY23 (July 2022-June 2023). Participants deemed eligible to participate were instructed to complete surveys on behalf of their organization or operation. Surveys included closed-ended and open-ended questions and participants had the option to enter their email address at the end of surveys to enter to win one (1) of two (2) \$50 merchandise cards. Survey participants' email addresses were not linked to survey responses. APEL and the NMFMA recruited survey participants via REDCap and email with regular reminders from October 23 through November 17, 2023. The survey invitation was sent to 151 individuals. If emails bounced back, alternative or updated contacts were provided by the NMFMA or the evaluation team called organizations.

Non-Participating Meat Operation Survey

A separate REDCap survey was distributed to New Mexico-based meat operations that did not participate in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. The NMFMA led the recruitment of these operations with assistance from the NMDA.

All participants were informed their participation was voluntary and data were collected anonymously. Participants first read a consent form and indicated consent to participate. Surveys then included screening questions assessing the following inclusion criteria: at least 18 years of age; located in New Mexico; selling beef, bison, lamb/mutton, and/or pork; and not involved in the FY23 NM Grown Meat Pilot Program. Participants who were deemed eligible to participate were instructed to complete surveys on behalf of their operation. Surveys included closed-ended and open-ended questions and participants had the option to enter their email address at the end of surveys to enter to win one (1) of two (2) \$50 merchandise cards. Survey participants' email addresses were not linked to survey responses. NMFMA recruited survey participants via email with one reminder from October 23 through November 30, 2023. The non-participant survey link was distributed by the NMFMA, the NMDA, and one other New Mexico-based industry organization.

Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Qualitative data were collected through open-ended evaluation survey questions, five 30-minute virtual key informant interviews, and two 60-minute virtual focus groups with three participants each. Interviews and focus groups were led by members of the APEL evaluation team and the NMFMA provided input on guides (Appendix B). The NMFMA provided suggestions for eleven (11) individuals to recruit for interviews and focus groups. Buyers and vendors could also express interest in participating while completing the surveys described above. Fourteen responses to the interview/focus group interest survey were received. The APEL evaluation team led recruitment efforts for interviews and focus groups.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted via Zoom in October and November 2023. Interview participants received a \$30 merchandise card and focus groups participants received a \$50 merchandise card after participating. Interviews and focus groups were transcribed using Trint software and reviewed by the evaluation team. Inductive content analysis was performed to identify themes and concepts for each prompt and open-ended question. Data were coded using NVivo qualitative analysis software.

Source Document Review

The NMFMA also provided 22 documents for the evaluation team to review as part of the evaluation. These documents included outreach and recruitment material sent to potential suppliers advertising the NM Grown Meat Pilot Program (emails, brochure, social media outreach, etc.); NM Approved Supplier Program Guidance for the Meat Pilot Program which included background, purchasing guidelines, vendor guidelines, Approved Supplier Purchases and Sales, and contact information; FY23 Meat Pilot Allowable Products list; FY23 Approved Supplier List which also included all buyers with contact information; FY23 Meat Vendor Approved Supplier Program application and responses from applicants; NM Meat to Institutions Roundtable Notes; NM Grown Meat Event Invite and Schedule; a presentation prepared by The Food Depot including learnings from food banks; and other reports and materials (e.g., Taos Community Foundation’s Study of Grass Fed Beef as a Value Chain in North Central New Mexico and the San Luis Valley).

IV. Evaluation Results

Meat Supply Chain Mapping

Most suppliers that participated in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program were located in Northern (n=12, 43%) or Central New Mexico (n=10, 36%); no suppliers were located in Southern/Southwestern New Mexico and just three (11%) were located in Eastern and two (7%) were located in Northwestern New Mexico. The majority of producers were located in Northern New Mexico (n=7, 50%) as were the majority of processors (n=4, 67%). No processors, distributors, or producer collectives were located in Northwestern New Mexico and no food hubs, distributors or producer collectives were located in Eastern New Mexico. Table 2 shows the breakdown of suppliers by type and location.

	n (%)	Central	Northern	Northwest	Eastern	Southern	AZ ^a
All Suppliers	28 (100)	10 (36)	12 (43)	2 (7)	3 (11)	0 (0)	1 (4)
Producers	14 (50)	4 (29)	7 (50)	1 (7)	2 (14)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Processors	6 (21)	1 (17)	4 (67)	0 (0)	1 (17)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Food hubs	5 (18)	2 (40)	1 (20)	1 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (20)
Distributors	3 (11)	2 (67)	1 (33)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Producer collectives	2 (7)	1 (50)	1 (50)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

^aOne Arizona (AZ)-based food hub met NM Grown Approved Supplier criteria (See Box 1 on page 7) and participated in the Meat Pilot

Most FY23 NM Grown buyers were located in Central (n=47, 32%) or Northern New Mexico (n=39, 26%). The fewest buyers were located in Eastern (n=14, 9%) or Northwestern New Mexico (n=18, 12%). Table 3 shows the breakdown of buyers by type and location.

Table 3. Geographic location of FY23 NM Grown buyers by type (n=148)

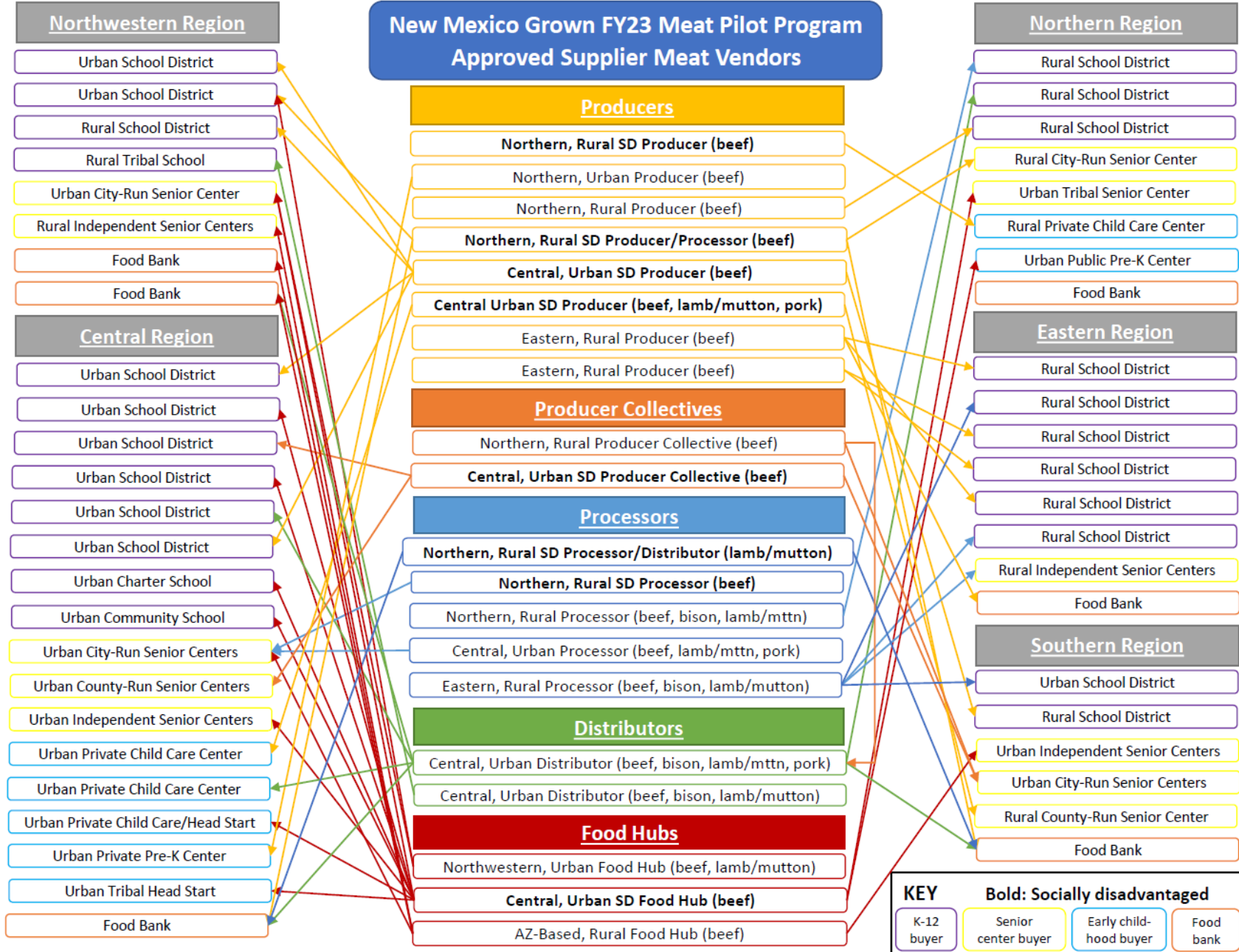
	n (%)	Central	Northern	Northwest	Eastern	Southern	Multiple
All Buyers	148 (100)	47 (32)	39 (26)	18 (12)	14 (9)	28 (19)	2 (1)
K-12 schools	58 (39)	16 (28)	18 (31)	8 (14)	7 (12)	9 (16)	0 (0)
Early childhood	33 (22)	17 (52)	6 (18)	3 (9)	3 (9)	3 (9)	1 (3)
Senior centers	56 (38)	14 (25)	15 (27)	7 (13)	4 (7)	16 (29)	0 (0)
Food banks	5 (0.7)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)	0 (0)
Buyer to supplier ratio	5.3	4.7	3.3	9.0	4.7	No suppliers	--

Availability of purchasing data provided by state agencies varied significantly, evident in the final supply chain map (see page 15). NM Grown meat purchasing data for FY23 were available for food banks and participating senior centers. For senior centers, however, only the total amount spent by center was available, not information regarding which suppliers each center purchased meat from. Allocations for meat purchases through NM Grown were available for K-12 schools, but not actual purchases. No meat allocation or purchasing data were available for early childhood centers. Therefore, the evaluation team attempted to contact all individual buyers and suppliers to inquire about purchasing during the FY23 Meat Pilot.

Despite the lack of availability of comprehensive meat purchasing data, the final supply chain map on page 15 shows food banks, senior centers, K-12 schools, and early childhood centers purchased from most of the 28 approved supplier meat vendors, including those that identified as socially disadvantaged. Through outreach and available state agency purchasing data, the evaluation team found at least 23 K-12 schools (40%), 21 senior centers (38%), seven (7) early childhood centers (21%), and the central purchasing food bank (100%) purchased meat that was distributed to at least five (5) food banks from 20 (71%) different approved suppliers during FY23. The supply chain map also highlights important gaps in the availability of meat suppliers across the state; for example, 28 (19%) of buyers were located in southern/southwestern New Mexico while no approved suppliers were located in this region.

To enhance the understanding of the meat supply chain in New Mexico, standardized purchasing data from state agencies and food banks participating in NM Grown are required including: initial allocation for meat purchasing, actual amount spent purchasing meat **by type** from each supplier, and total amount spent purchasing meat by fiscal year for each individual buyer. Additionally, the movement of meat products between suppliers before reaching buyers (for example, from producer to processor to distributor) is important to consider in future meat supply chain mapping. Together, these data would allow for a more detailed supply chain map showing movement of each type of meat included in the NM Grown Program through the entire supply chain.

**New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program
Approved Supplier Meat Vendors**



Survey, Focus Group, and Interview Results

Sixty-six (66) individuals consented to participate in the buyer/vendor evaluation survey. Twenty-four (36%) were not eligible based on screening questions and did not proceed with the survey. The most common reason individuals were not eligible to participate was not being involved in their organization or operation's Meat Pilot Program participation for at least six months. After completing screening questions, 42 complete or partial responses were received from 28 buyers and 14 approved supplier meat vendors, yielding an overall response rate of 28%. All partial and complete responses are presented in this report.

Eight (8) individuals consented to participate in the non-participating meat operation survey. Four (50%) were not eligible based on screening questions and did not proceed with the survey. The most common reason individuals were not eligible to participate was not completing the screening questions. After completing screening questions, four (4) complete or partial responses were received. All partial and complete responses are presented in this report.

In addition to 11 key stakeholders identified by the NMFMA, 14 individuals expressed interest in participating in an interview or focus group. The evaluation team contacted all 25 individuals, and of these, five (5) participated in an interview and six (6) participated in one of two focus groups (response rate=44%). Interview and focus group participants represented approved supplier meat vendors, buyers, and other key Program stakeholders.

FY23 Meat Pilot Program Approved Supplier Meat Vendor Results:

Fourteen (50%) of the 28 approved supplier meat vendors that participated in the FY23 Meat Pilot completed an evaluation survey. Most evaluation participants were producers (n=9, 64%), processors (n=5, 36%), or food hubs (n=5, 36%). Four distributors and two producer collectives also participated. In the evaluation survey, six of the nine producers (67%) identified as socially disadvantaged according to the USDA's definition (Box 2) which was also provided in the survey.

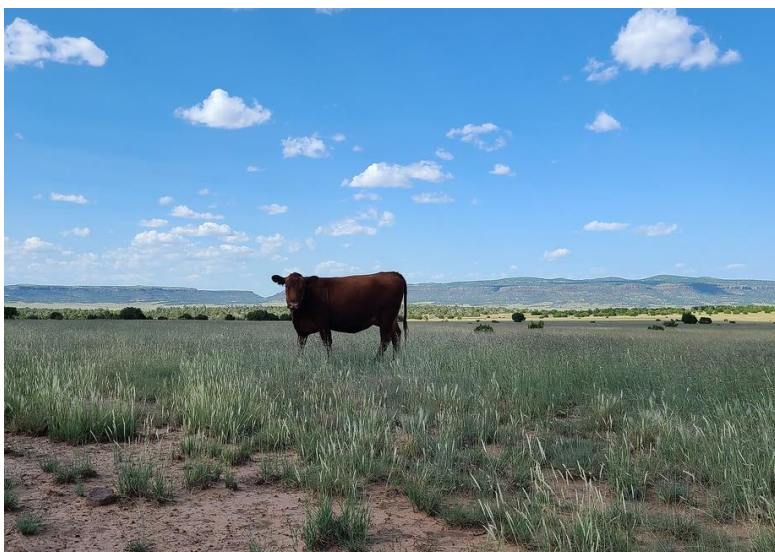


Photo Credit: Minesh Bacrania, Sol Ranch, Wagon Mound, NM

All approved suppliers that completed a survey sold beef (n=14, 100%); fewer sold pork (n=4, 29%) or lamb/mutton (n=4, 29%) and no survey participants sold bison. Table 4 shows the types of meat products sold by survey participants during the Meat Pilot Program. Overall, all approved supplier survey participants sold frozen meat products (n=14, 100%) and most sold grass-fed or grass-finished (n=9, 64%) and hormone-free meat products (n=8, 57%). Few sold fresh meat products (n=1, 7%) and no suppliers (0%) sold USDA-certified organic meat products. Table 4 also shows the

breakdown of meat and types of products sold by operation type (producer, processor, or other) and by self-reported socially disadvantaged status.

Table 4. Products sold [n (%)] during the FY23 Meat Pilot by approved supplier meat vendor survey respondents by operation type and socially disadvantaged status

	Operation Type				Socially Disadvantaged ^b	
	All suppliers (n=14)	Producers (n=9)	Processors (n=5)	Other ^a (n=7)	Yes (n=6)	No or N/A (n=8)
Beef	14 (100)	9 (100)	5 (100)	7 (100)	6 (100)	8 (100)
Pork	4 (29)	2 (22)	1 (20)	1 (14)	2 (33)	2 (25)
Lamb/mutton	4 (29)	2 (22)	0 (0)	2 (29)	2 (33)	2 (25)
Bison	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Frozen meat products	14 (100)	9 (100)	5 (100)	7 (100)	6 (100)	8 (100)
Fresh meat products	1 (7)	1 (11)	1 (20)	1 (14)	0 (0)	1 (13)
Grass-fed or grass-finished	9 (64)	6 (67)	3 (60)	5 (71)	4 (67)	5 (63)
Hormone-free	8 (57)	5 (56)	2 (40)	5 (71)	3 (50)	5 (63)
Free-range/pasture raised	4 (29)	3 (33)	2 (40)	2 (29)	2 (33)	2 (25)
USDA certified organic	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

^aOther includes producer collectives, food hubs, and distributors; ^bSee Box 2 for USDA definition of socially disadvantaged producer

Table 5 shows approved supplier survey participants' satisfaction with various components of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. **More than half were satisfied or very satisfied with all components evaluated.** All (n=13, 100%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating in the Meat Pilot Program and the application process to become an approved supplier meat vendor. Program components with the highest level of dissatisfaction among approved suppliers included the amount of product sold (n=3, 23% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) followed by the ability to find interested buyers (n=2, 15% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) and ease of doing business with meat buyers including communications, invoicing, distribution requirements, and payment terms (n=2, 15% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied).

Table 5. Approved supplier survey respondents' (n=14) satisfaction with components of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program

	Mean (SD) ^a	Dissatisfied ^b n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Satisfied ^c n (%)	N/A n (%)
Recruitment and marketing materials inviting your operation's participation in the program	4.2 (0.7)	0 (0)	2 (15)	11 (85)	0 (0)
Knowledge of Meat Pilot Program goals	4.2 (0.7)	0 (0)	2 (15)	11 (85)	0 (0)
Knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating in the Meat Pilot Program	4.5 (0.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (100)	0 (0)

Application process to become an approved supplier meat vendor	4.5 (0.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (100)	0 (0)
USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) registration and inspection process for meat handling and distribution	4.3 (0.6)	0 (0)	1 (8)	12 (92)	0 (0)
Pricing of meat products	3.9 (1.0)	1 (8)	3 (23)	9 (69)	0 (0)
Ability to find interested buyers	3.8 (1.1)	2 (15)	2 (15)	8 (62)	1 (8)
Ease of doing business with meat buyers (including: communications, invoicing, distribution requirements, payment terms)	3.8 (1.1)	2 (15)	2 (15)	9 (69)	0 (0)
Buyer satisfaction with meat products	4.5 (0.7)	0 (0)	1 (8)	10 (77)	2 (15)
Amount of product sold during the Meat Pilot Program (July 2022-June 2023)	3.5 (1.1)	3 (23)	3 (23)	7 (54)	0 (0)
Participation in the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Taste the Tradition/Grown with Tradition Logo Program	3.8 (0.8)	0 (0)	5 (39)	7 (54)	1 (8)
Technical Assistance and support received from the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA)	4.2 (1.0)	1 (8)	2 (15)	10 (77)	0 (0)
Technical Assistance and support received from the NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA)	4.2 (0.9)	1 (8)	1 (8)	11 (85)	0 (0)
Overall experience participating in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program	4.5 (0.7)	0 (0)	1 (8)	12 (92)	0 (0)

^aVery dissatisfied=1, dissatisfied=2, neutral=3, satisfied=4, very satisfied=5; ^bDissatisfied = very dissatisfied and dissatisfied; ^cSatisfied = very satisfied and satisfied

Figure 1 shows approved supplier survey respondents' abilities to respond to buyer requests during the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Most reported buyers' requests for packaging of meat products (n=9, 75%) and volume of meat products requested (n=8, 67%) were easy or very easy to respond to. Most were neutral on their ability to respond to the volume of products buyers actually purchased (n=7, 58%). Some suppliers (n=2, 17%) reported difficulty responding to buyers' requests for specific meat products and buyers' requests for transport of meat products, though more suppliers were neutral or found these requests easy to fulfill.

Figure 1. Approved supplier survey respondents' (n=14) reported degree of difficulty (%) in responding to buyer requests during the FY23 Meat Pilot



Finally, and importantly, **92% (n=12) of approved suppliers that completed a survey were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience participating in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program and all (n=14, 100%) indicated they would participate as a NM Grown approved supplier meat vendor in the future.**

Qualitative Results

Three (3) FY23 Meat Pilot Program approved supplier meat vendors participated in an interview or focus group, and 14 suppliers provided responses to six open-ended questions included in the buyer/vendor survey.

Meat Pilot Program Successes

Suppliers discussed Program successes related to opportunities for expanding local markets, connecting with buyers, and potential impact on local food security and the economy. Suppliers mentioned that the Meat Pilot Program offered an opportunity for a special group of New Mexico ranchers to sell clean, healthy, thoughtfully grown beef and other meat products to new, local markets. Suppliers reported the Program has the potential to impact the local economy by expanding the local market through sustainable and responsible practices, as illustrated by the following quote:

The concept of the Program is something we heavily believe in and support. [Redacted] is made up of small New Mexico ranches that produce beef in the most environmentally

friendly, humane, and clean manner possible. We would like to see this Program continue and grow on a long-term basis. - Supplier



Photo Credit: Minesh Bacrania, Sol Ranch, Wagon Mound, NM

The FY23 Meat Pilot Program allowed suppliers to expand their connections with potential buyers. Regarding the “NM Grown: Ranch-to-Institutional Market Summit,” one supplier stated that “the buyer/supplier meeting was a great opportunity for us to establish more connections with buyers throughout the state.” Suppliers also mentioned that selling products through Food Hubs and Food Co-Ops was more successful for smaller producers and producer collectives compared to direct sales to buyers. As one supplier described:

You know, you had some hubs that might have a little bit of local meats or whatever, but it might have been the one rancher who had a few cows, but never before, like I said, have they had the mutton or any of these other products...so it's been really great to see the diversity, the increase of the meat into these hubs, which is reaching the areas where perhaps they hadn't gotten reached before. - Supplier

Suppliers also described that the Meat Pilot Program offered an opportunity to improve food security in their communities. This opportunity was noted as a motivating factor to participate in the program. As one supplier mentioned, “Our operation as a [redacted] facility is to expand market opportunities for local ranchers and provide locally produced food to the food insecure residents in the communities we serve.”

Meat Pilot Program Barriers and Suggestions

Suppliers discussed barriers related to order fulfillment logistics and buyer demand. For example, individual suppliers may not be equipped to meet buyers’ requests for significant amounts of product (e.g., 5,000-10,000 pounds). One supplier mentioned that “people requesting fresh meat products and not understanding liability/ transportation/ storage issues with fresh products for small producers” was challenging for them during the program. Suppliers also described that buyers’ requests for large volumes of specific cuts (e.g., steaks, roasts) can be difficult to fulfill compared to selling a whole or half animal, as demonstrated by the following:

They were working on getting and figuring out orders that they were able to fulfill based on our capabilities. I mean, there's some 10,000 pounds of stew meat, and we, that's not something we just carry on hand. We're very, I don't know how to describe it, we're just, we don't have warehouses, we don't carry a lot of inventory. There's so many different

cuts within an animal, so just to sell one -- and that's where ground beef in this Program initially has been helpful -- but we would like to see that expand, if possible, to some of the other cuts, steaks and roasts and whatnot. That would help us move our premium animals. - Supplier

Suggestions for improvement were related to expanding to include more buyers and providing information to buyers so that they have a better understanding of supplier capacity. Although expanding was seen as a success, suppliers mentioned that their expectations for significantly expanding into new markets were not met. Suggestions for expansion included access to more buyers, with particular attention to overcoming barriers in rural locations. One participant suggested: "Understanding the challenges and needs of rural communities and locations. Identifying the Suppliers that are willing to provide and distribute meat products to rural locations." Educating buyers on suppliers' capacity was also suggested (e.g., "communication with buyers of what we can provide") to facilitate more realistic and fulfillable requests. Lastly, suppliers reported a general suggestion to expand the Program but also acknowledged practical challenges related to growth, as illustrated by the following quote:

I don't know, because see it's easy to say, throw out suggestions, but it's about implementation, and I understand very well how hard it is to do it all. And unless you have the right workforce or the support from, the organizations that received the product are understaffed sometimes. And I'm not going to, I can make lots of suggestions, but I don't know if it's really practical because I think everyone's trying their hardest. - Supplier

FY23 Meat Pilot Program Buyer Results:

Twenty-eight (28) NM Grown buyers who participated in the FY23 Meat Pilot completed an evaluation survey (response rate=19%). Most (n=12, 43%) represented K-12 schools. Eight (8) early childhood education centers, six (6) senior centers, and two (2) food bank representatives also completed evaluation surveys. Most survey respondents identified as individual buyers that purchased meat products to distribute directly to clients (n=22, 79%) and fewer identified as collective buyers (n=6, 21%), purchasing meat products to distribute to other locations/centers to distribute to clients.

*On average, buyers reported **34%** (standard deviation=18%; range=0-80%) of their New Mexico Grown grant allocation for local food purchasing was spent on meat products in FY23.*

As shown in Table 6, all buyers that completed a survey reported purchasing beef (n=28, 100%) during the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Fewer reported purchasing pork (n=8, 29%), lamb/mutton (n=4, 14%) and bison (n=1, 4%). Most buyers purchased frozen meat products (n=19, 68%) and grass-fed or grass-finished products (n=15, 54%). Fewer purchased USDA-certified organic (n=5, 18%) or hormone-free products (n=4, 14%). Types of meat and types of meat products purchased varied by buyer type. For example, a higher percentage of senior centers reported purchasing fresh meat products (n=4, 67%) compared to K-12 (n=4, 33%), early childhood centers (n=3, 38%), and food banks (n=0, 0%). Additionally, a higher percentage of collective buyers reported purchasing grass-fed or grass-finished (n=5, 83%), fresh (n=3, 50%), free-range/pasture-raised (n=3, 50%), USDA-certified organic (n=2, 33%), and hormone-free meat products (n=3, 50%) compared to individual buyers.

Table 6. Products purchased [n (%)] during the FY23 Meat Pilot Program by buyer type, for buyer survey respondents

	All buyers (n=28)	Type of Organization				Type of Buyer	
		K-12 (n=12)	Early childhood (n=8)	Senior (n=6)	Food bank (n=2)	Individual (n=22)	Collective (n=6)
Beef	28 (100)	12 (100)	8 (100)	6 (100)	2 (100)	22 (100)	6 (100)
Pork	8 (29)	2 (17)	2 (25)	2 (33)	2 (100)	5 (23)	3 (50)
Lamb/mutton	4 (14)	1 (8)	1 (13)	0 (0)	2 (100)	2 (9)	2 (33)
Bison	1 (4)	1 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)
Frozen meat products	19 (68)	8 (67)	5 (63)	4 (67)	2 (100)	16 (73)	3 (50)
Fresh meat products	11 (39)	4 (33)	3 (38)	4 (67)	0 (0)	8 (37)	3 (50)
Grass-fed or grass-finished	15 (54)	4 (33)	5 (63)	4 (67)	2 (100)	10 (46)	5 (83)
Free-range/ pasture raised	6 (21)	1 (8)	1 (13)	2 (33)	2 (100)	3 (14)	3 (50)
USDA certified organic	5 (18)	0 (0)	2 (25)	3 (50)	0 (0)	3 (14)	2 (33)
Hormone-free	4 (14)	0 (0)	1 (13)	1 (17)	2 (100)	1 (5)	3 (50)

Table 7 shows buyer survey respondents' satisfaction with various components of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. At least 50% of buyers who completed a survey were satisfied or very satisfied with all components of the Meat Pilot Program evaluated except technical assistance and support received from the NMFMA (44% satisfied or very satisfied) or the NMDA (30% satisfied or very satisfied); however, most were neutral or selected "N/A" for these two components. The highest degree of satisfaction was reported for packaging of meat products (n=25, 93% satisfied or very satisfied) followed by quality of meat products purchased (n=23, 92% satisfied or very satisfied) and ease of doing business with meat suppliers (n=24, 89%). Few buyers were dissatisfied with any components of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. The highest degree of dissatisfaction was reported for knowledge of Meat Pilot goals (n=5, 19% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) and knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating in the Program (n=4, 15% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied).

Table 7. Buyer survey participants' (n=28) satisfaction with components of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program

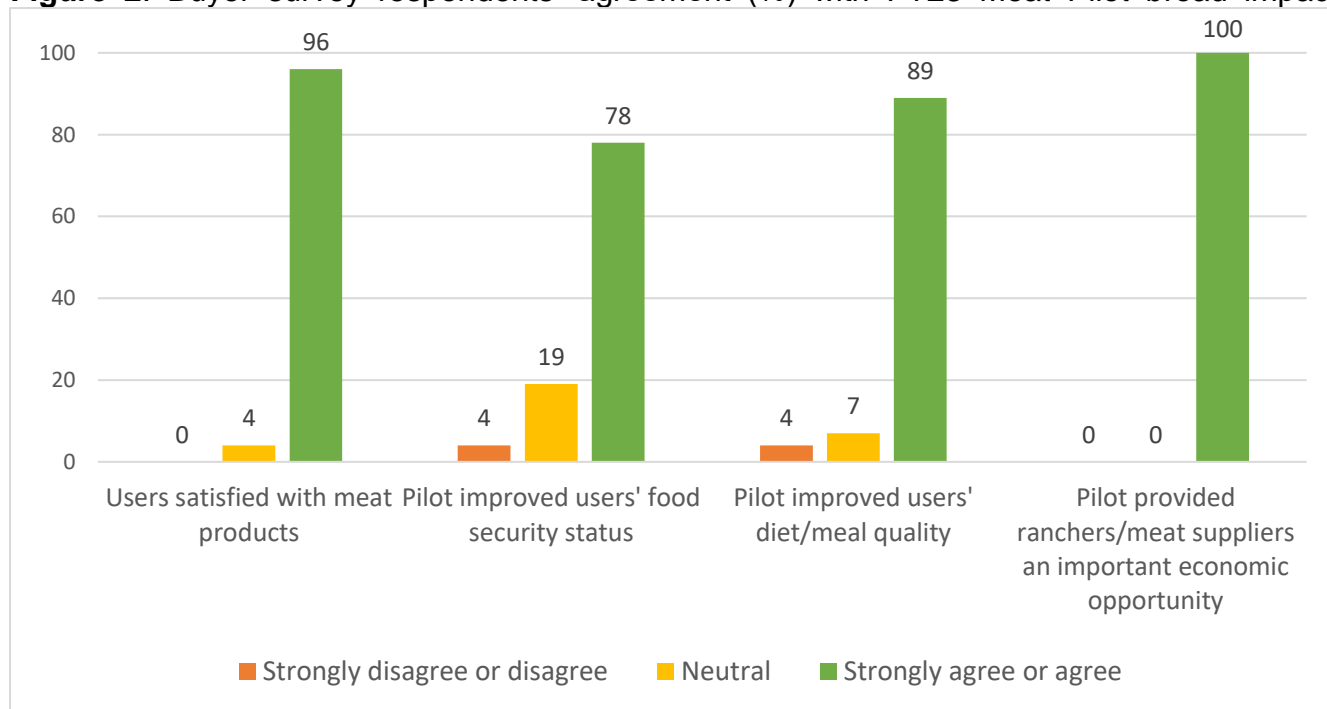
	Mean (SD) ^a	Dissatisfied ^b n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Satisfied ^c n (%)	N/A n (%)
Recruitment and marketing materials inviting your organization's participation in the program	4.1 (0.9)	2 (8)	3 (12)	20 (77)	1 (4)
Knowledge of Meat Pilot Program goals	3.7 (1.1)	5 (19)	6 (22)	16 (59)	0 (0)
Knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating in the Meat Pilot Program	3.8 (1.0)	4 (15)	5 (19)	18 (67)	0 (0)
Availability of supply of preferred meat products in needed volumes	4.1 (0.9)	3 (11)	1 (4)	23 (85)	0 (0)

Packaging of meat products	4.4 (0.7)	1 (4)	1 (4)	25 (93)	0 (0)
Transport of meat products	4.3 (0.8)	1 (4)	2 (7)	23 (85)	1 (4)
Pricing of meat products	3.6 (1.1)	3 (11)	10 (37)	14 (52)	0 (0)
Safety and traceability of meat products	4.2 (0.8)	0 (0)	6 (22)	21 (78)	0 (0)
Ease of doing business with meat suppliers	4.4 (0.8)	1 (4)	2 (7)	24 (89)	0 (0)
Quality of meat products purchased	4.6 (0.6)	0 (0)	1 (4)	23 (92)	1 (4)
Technical Assistance and support received from the NMFMA	3.9 (0.9)	0 (0)	9 (33)	12 (44)	6 (22)
Technical Assistance and support received from the NMDA	3.5 (0.7)	0 (0)	11 (41)	8 (30)	8 (30)
Overall experience participating in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program	4.2 (0.8)	1 (4)	3 (11)	23 (85)	0 (0)

^aVery dissatisfied=1, dissatisfied=2, neutral=3, satisfied=4, very satisfied=5; ^bDissatisfied = very dissatisfied and dissatisfied; ^cSatisfied = very satisfied and satisfied

Figure 2 shows buyer survey respondents' agreement with Meat Pilot Program impacts on users/consumers and local ranchers and meat suppliers. All (n=27, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed the Program provided ranchers and other meat suppliers an important economic opportunity, 96% (n=26) agreed or strongly agreed users/consumers were satisfied with products, 89% (n=24) agreed or strongly agreed the Program improved users'/consumers' diet and meal quality, and 78% agreed or strongly agreed the Program improved users'/consumers' food security status.

Figure 2. Buyer survey respondents' agreement (%) with FY23 Meat Pilot broad impacts



Overall, all buyers who completed an evaluation survey (n=28, 100%) indicated they would purchase NM Grown meat products in the future.

Qualitative Results:

Five NM Grown buyers participated in an interview or focus group, and 28 buyers provided responses to six open-ended questions included in the buyer/vendor survey.



Photo Credit: Mora Independent School District

Meat Pilot Program Successes

Buyers reported successes related to the quality and types of meat that were provided to them, the impact on participation in their meal programs, broader community-level impact, and a positive experience working with suppliers. Overall, buyers mentioned that the quantity and quality of beef available through the Program was outstanding. Meat and other high-protein, nutritious, high-value foods was the number one priority of food banks and clients served by food

banks. Buyers reported an interest in continuing to purchase NM Grown meats due to the high quality and opportunity to provide locally sourced meats to the community. As one buyer stated, “Yes, we love serving healthy, locally sourced meats to our clients and we love supporting our local New Mexico farmers and ranchers! We believe it results in healthier communities and contributes to a more resilient food system.”

Providing nutrient-dense foods to consumers aligned with buyers’ motivation for participating in the Meat Pilot Program. Buyers discussed the value of offering nutritious foods to the vulnerable populations that they serve, such as children. For example:

I'm really trying to bring a healthier diet to the kids we serve. And of course, too much, you see the French fries, the fried foods, the frozen canned foods, and even [canned] fruit. And I'm just, I really, really want to find ways to bring a healthier nutritional diet to children. I think it's part of their brain development. And I have a high concern about how we rank 50 in the nation. But I also look at, I feel diet's a part of it. I'm going to be honest. I feel like a healthier diet for children could help their learning. - Buyer

Regarding meat types, beef was noted as the greatest success. The inclusion of culturally relevant meat products such as bison and mutton was appreciated and successful, but there was a desire for more bison in particular:

I was personally excited and was looking to get some bison. We have the ability to try and get what are foods that are culturally relevant and culturally sensitive and in demand for our clientele but difficult to source. And I haven't seen any bison. I'm wondering if that's

partially because of just USDA processing facilities in the state and the lack thereof, particularly for that classification of an animal. Again, our populations, any and all proteins would be welcomed. - Buyer

I would say too that mutton has been kind of a cool thing. In the Northwest, like around the Navajo Nation, we're buying specifically for those populations that really love mutton. And that's kind of been a cool connection. And it's been surprising to see that there's been a good supply, actually, once we kind of put it out there. - Buyer

Buyers from schools also mentioned that students loved trying new types of meat like brisket and roasts, and staff enjoyed the meals as well. Some schools used creative strategies like "Nuevo Thursdays" to highlight new menu items:

My kids are always asking for new things and I always do my best to get them what they ask for. And, you know, like I said earlier, they eat a lot of chicken and a lot of ground beef, not so much any of the other stuff. And so something new, and it always excites them and they're always looking forward to something new. We also participate in something, it's kind of a, I guess, a piggyback off the NM Grown. It's called Nuevo Thursdays, where you just do something new on Thursday, so I can kind of count those two birds with one stone there. - Buyer

Buyers even reported that the Meat Pilot Program contributed to increased participation in their meal programs. An increase in participation was reported by senior centers; one buyer reported, "Participation in our senior meals program has increased 25% since we started to use NM Grown products." Buyers mentioned that participating in the Meat Pilot Program may have led to increased participation in school lunch programs in K-12 schools as well.

Buyers also spoke to the fact that the Program has benefitted local agriculture and economy and further discussed the urgency for agricultural transformation. Buyers discussed how the Meat Pilot Program served as a starting point for addressing this pressing issue, as illustrated by the following quote:

I think that has helped to make agriculture sexy again, and that's what we got to get it to. Because as much as [redacted] alluded to, we have a small window of opportunity to change the catastrophic agricultural problem that is brewing... if we don't do some things, make some drastic changes, we are not going to have food. And I don't think a lot of people understand this. The average farmer grower is well past 65, and the rate that younger people are coming in is nil. - Buyer

Finally, buyers mentioned that they had a positive experience working with vendors and that the "ease of purchasing" or the "ease of the program" contributed to the success of the program. Buyers discussed that vendors were able to meet their needs regarding quality, quantity, and type of meat. One participant mentioned:

It was new for all of us but I think it went very well I got help when needed and like I said before if you have a vendor like [redacted] its easy, they know what they are doing we know what we want and BOOM we have it. – Buyer

Like suppliers, buyers appreciated opportunities to foster new buyer-supplier connections. For example, one participant described how a meat summit provided an opportunity to establish and build relationships with potential suppliers.

NMDA, yes, did a meat summit in Albuquerque ... it was also an opportunity to say, 'sounds like this would be a great relationship going forward. You're in our area of the product we want' ... So I thought that was really helpful. We did make some connections there that we have continued to purchase from. - Buyer

Meat Pilot Program Barriers and Suggestions

Buyers reported suggestions for improvement regarding administrative support, additional information about available meat products, and the need for more opportunities to foster personal connections between buyers and vendors. Buyers mentioned that support with administrative aspects of Program participation would be helpful, such as submitting sheets for reimbursements and figuring out the location of vendors and frequency of distribution. Additional information about approved suppliers for buyers, such as proximity and location details, delivery information, and product details (e.g., type, fat content), was also desired. This would streamline the procurement process as well as promote transparency regarding traceability of products, nutrient content, and confidence in food safety, as illustrated by the following quotes:

It was always go to the Google sheets, which like that's helpful. But like you're telling me all these farms, I don't know where they're located. I don't know how far they are from me. You're calling numbers and I didn't have time. It was like if I could have gotten something a little more like, this one delivers, here's like a flyer of the items they're offering, that would have been so helpful. I was hoping that there could have been some kind of event, like an NM Grown grant event, like, come meet the vendors and then building that relationship. And then I can personally ask, like, are you are you near Albuquerque? Do you deliver? Because that was barriers for me for sure. - Buyer

Requiring more transparency from the meat producer, and possibly the meat processor. Requiring fat content on the label (otherwise, how do we know what product we are buying?), requiring the meat producer to inform NM Grown if they are suspended from operation for any reason. - Buyer

Buyers further elaborated on the importance and need for more personal connection with suppliers, and indicated a need for more formal and informal events to introduce buyers to approved supplier meat vendors. One participant mentioned, "I'd really like some events where we can meet the farmers and build relationships with them. I'd love for them to be able to show their product and us to get food samples." Buyers also mentioned that they would appreciate more approved supplier meat vendor options and that many ranchers, producers, and processors are currently missing from the approved supplier list.

Logistical issues such as driving to pick up items ordered in cases where suppliers were not in close proximity posed barriers for some buyers.

It's at least 45 minutes for me to drive to the next vendor. I haven't talked about if they would deliver or not. Some might. I don't know. Some have reached out... I can't remember where it was from, but so many have reached out. But I'm not able to utilize them because if they're not going to deliver, you know, I can't really take a day off just to go get meat type of deal. - Buyer

I'm looking at these farms, I'm like, do I have to travel 15 miles to go? Because that is an inconvenience in my world. We are so busy and that that was a factor for me. If they delivered and if I knew we could have gotten that on every Monday, that would have been, that, that would have helped me so much. But no, a Google spreadsheet for me was like, I think I explained this was just especially in the midst of coming off of COVID and surviving. And it was just another paper for me to look at that I didn't have time to figure out. - Buyer



Photo Credit: Monte Del Sol Charter School

School-specific barriers were related to financial and physical resources. Schools also suggested allowing more than 40% of their NM Grown budget to be spent on meat. As one buyer mentioned:

Last year we received over \$6,000. We could only spend 40% on meat, that left 60% for fruits and vegetables. Our growing season is very short when school starts and we have a great selection from a couple vendors, but a limited list. The cost of beef is high. I understand there are feed, processing, butcher costs, but when I can buy meat from commodities for less than half the cost, it makes it tough to purchase anything. This year we were awarded \$5,000 less, so the 40% doesn't go very far with the cost of beef. - Buyer

Schools also struggled with having to purchase items 1-2 months in advance, requiring advanced planning. Storage space (e.g., freezer) was also a barrier to ordering large quantities.

The most challenging was the vendor took a long time to get the beef to processing and after processing took several weeks to get it delivered. I make my menu a month in advance and that made it difficult to keep the meat in a freezer for a month with already limited space. – Buyer

Other Meat Pilot Program Stakeholders:

Three Meat Pilot Program stakeholders representing state agencies and industry organizations also participated in an interview or focus group.

Meat Pilot Program Successes

Key stakeholders reported successes reflecting those mentioned by buyers and suppliers, including buyer satisfaction with high-quality, locally sourced meat products. Stakeholders noted the affordability of accessing these products compared to alternative sources. As one participant described:

I would say that our seniors have an opportunity to have a meal that is sourced from local vendors, farmers, ranchers, when they probably would not have that opportunity. If they were to try to purchase that on their own at a farmer's market, they probably could not afford it. So with our senior centers purchasing and making those meals, predominantly local, maybe I'd say 50% of the meal is local. They're very happy because they wouldn't be able to do that on their own. So it's made a difference. And then they're purchasing more meat than they did before. - Key Stakeholder

Stakeholders emphasized the increased availability of diverse, culturally relevant meat products in regions that would not have had access to such options without the Meat Pilot Program. For instance, certain hubs may have had minimal access to local meats, often sourced from a single rancher with limited product variety, as illustrated by the following quote:

We've put safe foods into these areas that probably wouldn't have gotten as much than they would have. You know, you had some hubs that might have a little bit of local meats or whatever, but it might have been the one rancher who had a few cows, but never before, like I said, have they had the mutton or any of these other products that are allowed in the pork. So it's been really great to see the diversity, the increase of the meat into these hubs, which is reaching the areas where perhaps they hadn't gotten reached before. - Key Stakeholder

Stakeholders also offered a unique perspective on the benefits of keeping food in the state for buyers and suppliers:

To see the food going into these institutions. I've been privy to see some of the meals. See, talk to some of the, say for example, the seniors, and they know when it's not in New Mexico. They know when it's New Mexico carrots. They know when it's New Mexico beef. They taste the difference, and they appreciate the value of it. And then to see some of the successes of some of the ranchers coming into it. I was just out of a ranch last week and Friday, as a matter of fact, I was just talking with the rancher and he was sharing his success with the program with me, and he really appreciated, you know, he's been able to participate. He's one of those dual threats where he's an agricultural grower and a rancher and he's really appreciated this program to help expand his sales, and so and keep more of the food in the state. Which is truly what we need to do. - Key Stakeholder

Another stakeholder described how diversification of local suppliers' businesses to enhance the accessibility of nutritious, high-quality meat products to children and seniors was a marker of the Program's success:

For me, one of the successes is seeing those producer businesses that are propped up by this program and in a way where they're able to supplement a viable business with the premium cuts while also providing those stew meats and those still really high-quality beef products to students and seniors and people who need that nutritional value.
– Key Stakeholder

Meat Pilot Program Barriers and Suggestions

Key stakeholders echoed a need for more information and traceability that would benefit both buyers and suppliers. As one participant mentioned:

If you explain to them, much why, you know, why we need these things is creating traceability for the program, much like we do with food safety on the agricultural side... With meat, it's all about the traceability. Can we trace that particular cow or sheep or whatever it may be to a certain ranch or processing facility, etc.? And this is why we need to have these type of things. I think it's just... it's once again, it's what the ranchers need. I don't see it being a big challenge, but it's easy for me to say it's not. But that's why we offer the assistance. - Key Stakeholder

In line with the need for more information sharing, another key stakeholder highlighted challenges defining standards for what qualifies as "New Mexico beef":

I would say that when we were first kind of considering the standards of what would count as New Mexico meat, NMFMA has their own standard, but we continue to get feedback that's, what is New Mexico beef. Is it beef that is sold by a New Mexico producer? Is it beef that was born in New Mexico and spent most of its life in New Mexico? ...there's that kind of definitional ambiguity, and it has, different producers have different ideas on what counts as New Mexico beef. And that creates a certain amount of, I'll call it friction about what, where is the standard and how are we going to maintain it, so that the money is going to the right people. - Key Stakeholder

Another stakeholder shared ideas for a new independent food/distribution coordinator position to improve communication, solve problems related to logistics, and promote overall expansion of the Program.

I'm actually going to be advocating for an independent, what I'm calling an independent food coordinator, which is basically a distribution coordinator, to help manage our local food hubs, which are becoming a huge piece of this, as I've been working with them to become gap certified. And then that's how they have their policies, how they handle produce, how they handle meat, etc.. Well, if we could have someone that would be independent of all of these hubs, then we can get a better network of the hubs working together. They're doing pretty good themselves, but there are some challenges that lie

into centuries of just mistrust and different things along those lines. And if we had somebody that was truly independent, not working for any particular hub or affiliated with any particular hub, but that could just say, Farmington could call them and say, “Hey, I’m heading down to Albuquerque, are there any hubs that need a backhaul or hubs that have anything to move?” That food coordinator could then contact our hubs in Albuquerque and say, “Hey, I’ve got a truck coming down Tuesday from Farmington, do you have anything, or do you need a backhaul up to Farmington?” Just creating this, expanding this network as we’re going. – Key Stakeholder

Non-Participating Meat Operations Survey Results:

Four NM-based meat operations that did not participate in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program partially or fully completed an evaluation survey. Most participants identified as meat operation owners (n=2, 50%). One (25%) identified as an operator, one (25%) identified as a manager, and one (25%) identified as an admin. Counties represented by the four operations included Catron, Taos, and Torrance County. One individual discontinued the survey after answering the first few questions; therefore, the following results include three (3) survey participants.

All (n=3, 100%) were producers; no processors, distributors, food hubs or producer collectives were represented. Two (67%) identified as socially disadvantaged producers. All (n=3, 100%) reported selling beef and one (33%) reported selling pork. One (33%) reported selling fresh meat products and two (67%) reported selling frozen meat products. One (33%) reported selling grass-fed or grass-finished, free-range, and hormone-free meat products. None of the participants sold USDA-certified organic meat products.

Table 8 summarizes reasons why the three meat operations that completed a survey did not participate in the FY23 Meat Pilot. The most common reason was not knowing about the Program (n=2, 67%). Other reasons reported by one (33%) operation included couldn’t meet requirements, couldn’t transport products, didn’t have enough supply, processing issues/bottlenecks, and paperwork/administrative burden. Note that operations could select more than one reason.

Table 8. Reasons NM-based meat operation survey respondents (n=3) reported *not* participating in the FY23 Meat Pilot

	n (%)
Didn't know about the program	2 (67)
Couldn't meet requirements	1 (33)
Couldn't transport products	1 (33)
Didn't have enough supply	1 (33)
Processing issues/bottlenecks	1 (33)
Paperwork/administrative burden	1 (33)
Weren't interested in participating	0 (0)
Meat products didn't meet criteria for being considered "NM Grown"	0 (0)
Didn't anticipate making a profit	0 (0)
Already have enough markets	0 (0)

Two (2) of the three (3) participants (67%) reported “don’t know” when asked if they would participate in the future and one (1) (33%) indicated they would participate in the future.

Qualitative Results:

Three open-ended questions were included in the non-participating meat operation survey assessing why operations did not participate in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program, what would make operations more likely to participate, and a question requesting any other comments. Responses are included in Box 3.

Box 3. Responses to non-participating meat operation open-ended survey questions (n=3)
Can you tell us more about why your operation did not participate in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program?
– We are too small of an operation and cannot afford the processing to compete at scale.
– I just didn't know about it.
– Was not aware of the program or benefits of participating.
What would make your operation more likely to participate in the NM Grown Meat Program in the future?
– Being able to have our animals processed locally.
– I would need to know more about it. As it stands, I have more customers than I can handle, I am not interested in going to farmers' markets and I don't have enough product to sell to schools or restaurants.
– More information and clear explanations of benefits of participating.
Please enter any other comments here:
– I hope your program can help producers to find good local markets. I'd be happy to tell my fellow producers about it when I know more myself.

Evaluation Limitations

Recruitment of survey, interview, and focus group participants was a barrier in this evaluation. The evaluation team offered incentives to those who did participate; however, the evaluation survey response rate was low for buyers in particular. Requiring that evaluation survey participants were involved in their organization or operation’s Meat Pilot Program participation for at least six months in FY23 led to the disqualification of 14 willing participants and further contributed to the low response rate. Few suppliers that sold and buyers that purchased bison during the FY23 Meat Pilot were represented in surveys. Therefore, evaluation results reflect the experiences of organizations and operations that participated in this evaluation and may not represent the experiences of all buyers and approved suppliers that participated in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Additionally, just four partial survey responses were received from meat operations that did not participate in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program limiting the ability to comprehensively understand barriers to participation.

Importantly, standardized basic purchasing data were difficult to obtain or unavailable for many buyers, limiting the ability to more fully understand the meat pilot marketplace as well as the ability to produce a more detailed meat supply chain map. At the outset of the evaluation, the

team had expected more detailed data to be available through an NMFMA-led effort to establish a local food data portal for all NM Grown purchases. Delays in portal development, however, meant that the evaluation team did not have access to all meat pilot purchasing data.

V. Opportunities for Growth and Recommendations

This evaluation largely found buyers, approved supplier meat vendors, and stakeholders were satisfied with their participation in the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Based on suggestions that were mentioned by multiple evaluation participants in surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups, a summary of recommendations for the inclusion of meat products in NM Grown moving forward with representative quotes is included in Table 9.

Table 9. Summary of Opportunities for Growth

<p>1. Consider adding other protein-rich products to the NM Grown Program.</p>	<p><i>“But with the lack of chicken, which would be great because it’s very economical. We haven’t been able to access that. We haven’t been able to, there’s actually someone that grows tilapia up here that I would love to get tilapia, but that’s not something probably just because there isn’t enough motion there, it’s there’s probably not enough people doing that for them to create some standards for it.”</i></p>
<p>2. Consider exceptions to allow a higher percent of K-12 schools’ NM Grown budget to be spent on meat products – especially for smaller or more rural districts.</p>	<p><i>“The most challenging was to only use 40% of our allocation on meat.”</i></p>
<p>3. Provide more information about approved supplier meat vendors to buyers to ease burden of participating and promote transparency regarding vendor location, delivery information, and product details.</p>	<p><i>“The producers need to provide more info to the buyers. It would be nice if this information was on the approved supplier list.”</i></p> <p><i>“... all these farms, I don’t know where they’re located. I don’t know how far they are from me.”</i></p> <p><i>“Requiring fat content on the label (otherwise, how do we know what product we are buying?)”</i></p>
<p>4. Organize more meetings and networking (in-person and remote) between approved suppliers and buyers to facilitate community and trust building and boost participation.</p>	<p><i>“I’d really like some events where we can meet the farmers and build relationships with them. I’d love for them to be able to show their product and us to get food samples.”</i></p>
<p>5. Continue offering culturally-relevant options like bison and lamb/mutton.</p>	<p><i>“So far, we have not seen any bison meat readily available, and would love to bring this</i></p>

Prioritize the recruitment of additional bison producers across the state to participate in the program.

6. Increase marketing of the NM Grown Program and awareness to eligible ranchers, meat producers and processors that did not participate.
7. Further explore barriers to supplier participation, particularly among socially disadvantaged, smaller, and rural producers that may lack access to large-scale processing, storage, and infrastructure required to meet buyer needs to increase Program equity, fairness, and inclusion.
8. Operationalize and implement the local food data portal by the end of FY24 and promote standardized collection and reporting of purchasing data across buyer agencies.

protein source into food banks, especially where it is an important part of cultural food traditions... We also purchase mutton for servicing native communities."

"Many institutions in northeast New Mexico are unaware of the NM grown program and how it would benefit them."

"I just want to see more people on that list... to really support small growers"

"Meat supply chains are inherently complex with many different actors, and it has been difficult to understand the nuances of how they have operated/ functioned during NM Grown. In addition, we have not been able to get detailed information about FY23 meat purchases made by most of the NM Grown buyers. Outside of food bank purchases (where we have very detailed data), we don't have enough of a sense of purchasing information (product types, quantities, \$ amounts, at what prices, from what suppliers, etc.)."

VI. Conclusion

The FY23 Meat Pilot Program was designed to introduce meat products to NM Grown, connecting New Mexico-based farmers, ranchers, and other food producers to buyers across the state including K-12, early childhood and senior centers, and food banks. During the FY23 Meat Pilot Program, 28 producers, processors, distributors, food hubs, and producer collectives served as approved supplier meat vendors, selling local beef, lamb/mutton, pork, and bison to over 100 NM Grown buyers. In turn, buyers were able to serve local, culturally-relevant and sometimes novel meat products to New Mexico's most vulnerable populations including children, the elderly, and food insecure food bank clients across the state. Importantly, since the establishment of the FY23 Meat Pilot Program, demand for NM Grown meat continues to expand due to increased federal and state funding allocations; therefore, meat will continue to be included in NM Grown during FY24 and beyond.

This mixed methods evaluation of the NM Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program, conducted in fall 2023, found the Program was an overwhelming success according to participating buyers, approved supplier meat vendors, and other key stakeholders. Overall satisfaction with the Meat Pilot Program was very high, and all buyers and suppliers indicated they would participate in the future. Despite lack of standardized data across NM Grown buyers for meat purchases in FY23, supply chain mapping revealed that buyers of all types purchased meat products from a variety of suppliers across geographic areas including socially disadvantaged producers. The Pilot Program therefore provided an equitable economic opportunity for local farmers and ranchers and served rural and urban buyers of all types and sizes, upholding the NM Grown and the NMFMA standard of values-based procurement. Recruiting more NM Grown approved supplier meat vendors, particularly in Southern, Northwestern, and Eastern New Mexico; those that sell bison; and those that identify as socially disadvantaged could further enhance the Program's equity, fairness and inclusion. Moreover, tracking meat purchasing data through a standardized data portal, and considering collecting data from meat consumers/users (not just institutional buyers), could result in stronger insight into the New Mexico meat supply chain and impacts of including meat products in NM Grown.

Suggestions for improvement for the inclusion of meat products in NM Grown were valuable and expected for a pilot program in its first year of implementation. The general feeling from evaluation participants was that participation, demand, and supply will increase over time as administrative, logistical, and transportation barriers are addressed. With a stronger focus on increasing the number of approved suppliers that offer a variety of meat products across the state; aiding local ranchers and producers to build infrastructure that allows for processing, storage, and transport of larger quantities of meat products necessary for many large-scale buyers like school districts; connecting buyers and approved suppliers in-person and virtually across the state; and continuing to offer culturally-relevant, high-quality, nutritious meat products in varied quantities and forms to New Mexico's most vulnerable populations, the addition of meat products to NM Grown has and will continue to benefit the health and economy of New Mexico communities.

VII. Acknowledgements

The evaluation team (APEL and the NMFMA) would like to acknowledge all evaluation participants for providing invaluable input on the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. Additionally, the evaluation team thanks Dr. Francisco Soto Mas, Director of APEL, for his expertise and guidance throughout the evaluation.

VIII. Suggested Citation

Coakley KE, Buro AW, Sandoval C, Crawford-Garrett B. New Mexico Grown FY2023 Meat Pilot Program Evaluation: Impacts, Opportunities, and Recommendations. 2024. Published by the University of New Mexico Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation Lab (APEL) and New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA).

IX. References

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2. Konar, M. and D. Karakoc. "Mapping Food Flow Networks and the Food Supply Chain, Part 1." *farmdoc daily* (13):124, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, July 6, 2023.

X. Appendices

Appendix A: Final Evaluation Plan

	Participants	Key Questions	Data	Indicators	Target	Reporting
Goal 1: Create New Mexico Grown supply chain maps for beef, bison, lamb/mutton and pork.						
<i>Objective 1.1: Understand local New Mexico Grown meat supply chains for beef, bison, lamb/mutton and pork in New Mexico.</i>	All New Mexico Grown approved supplier meat vendor (FY23 and other years)	Who are key actors in the New Mexico Grown meat supply chain for beef, bison, lamb/mutton, and pork and what are their roles? How have smaller-scale and socially disadvantaged supply chain actors benefited or not benefited? What traceability and source verification practices are being utilized by approved vendors? How were equity/fairness/inclusion present during the Meat Pilot?	NMFMA-provided templates; outreach to New Mexico Grown meat supply chain key actors	New Mexico Grown supply chain mapping for beef, bison, lamb/mutton and pork and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of primary livestock producer Phases of livestock raising, processing, distribution, etc. Interactions among key actors 	12/23	NMFMA-provided templates and inclusion in final report
Goal 2: Engage buyers, approved supplier meat vendors, and other stakeholders to evaluate the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program.						
<i>Objective 2.1: Gather and assess feedback to identify barriers to participating in the FY23 Meat Pilot.</i>	FY23 Meat Pilot buyers and approved meat supplier vendors; other FY23 stakeholders	What was most challenging and why? Reasons for participating/not participating in FY24 program.	REDCap survey, key informant interviews, focus groups	Level of buyer/vendor dissatisfaction; buyer and vendor-identified barriers	12/23	Summary of survey, interview, focus group data in final report
<i>Objective 2.2: Gather and assess feedback to identify FY23 Meat Pilot Program successes.</i>	FY23 Meat Pilot buyers and approved meat supplier vendors; other FY23 stakeholders	What worked well and why? Reasons for participating/not participating in FY24 program.	REDCap survey, key informant interviews, focus groups	Level of buyer/vendor satisfaction; buyer and vendor-identified successes	12/23	Summary of survey, interview, focus group data in final report
Goal 3: Engage buyers, approved supplier meat vendors, and other stakeholders to identify growth opportunities for the New Mexico Grown meat program moving forward.						
<i>Objective 3.1: Assess stakeholder feedback to identify growth opportunities to promote equitable, satisfactory meat product inclusion in New Mexico Grown.</i>	FY23 Meat Pilot buyers, vendors, Food Hubs and Distributors; NMDA, NMSU Extension, NMFMA, New Mexico Grown	What roles did stakeholders play and how effective were they? What additional Technical Assistance and support are needed in the future from entities such as NMFMA, NMDA, and others?	Key informant interviews, focus groups	Stakeholder roles, stakeholder effectiveness, support effectiveness and support needs	12/23	Summary of interviews and focus groups in final report

Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments

Buyer Survey

Please answer all survey questions on behalf of your organization.

1. Please type of the name of your organization:
2. Which of the following best fits how your organization purchased and distributed meat products through the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program?
 - a. Individual buyer: we purchased meat products to directly distribute to clients.
 - b. Collective buyer: we purchased meat products to distribute to other centers/locations to distribute to clients.
3. Please select which meat products your organization purchased during the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. You may select more than one.
 - a. Beef
 - b. Bison
 - c. Lamb/mutton
 - d. Pork
 - e. None of the above
4. Please select types of meat products your organization purchased during the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. You may select more than one.
 - a. Fresh meat products
 - b. Frozen meat products
 - c. USDA certified organic meat products
 - d. Grass-fed and/or grass-finished meat products
 - e. Free-range/pasture raised meat products
 - f. Hormone-free meat products
 - g. Other (please specify: _____)
 - h. None of the above
5. Approximately what percent of your organization's New Mexico Grown grant allocation for local food purchasing was spent on meat products in FY23 (July 2022-June 2023)?

Please rate your organization's satisfaction with the following components of the FY23 (July 2022-June 2023) New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program:

Scale: very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, very satisfied, not applicable

6. Recruitment and marketing materials inviting your organization's participation in the program
7. Knowledge of Meat Pilot Program goals
8. Knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating in the Meat Pilot Program
9. Availability of supply of preferred meat products in needed volumes
10. Packaging of meat products
11. Transport of meat products
12. Pricing of meat products
13. Safety and traceability of meat products
14. Ease of doing business with meat suppliers
15. Quality of meat products purchased

16. Technical Assistance and support received from the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA)
17. Technical Assistance and support received from the NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA)
18. Overall experience participating in the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program

19. Please expand upon any ratings here:

Please rate your organization's agreement to the following statements regarding the FY23 (July 2022-June 2023) New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program:

Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, not applicable

20. Users/consumers were satisfied with New Mexico Grown meat products.
21. The FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot improved users'/consumers' food security status.
22. The FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot improved users'/consumers' diet/meal quality.
23. The FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot provided ranchers and other meat suppliers an important economic opportunity.

24. Will your organization purchase New Mexico Grown meat products in the future?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

25. Please list reasons why your organization will purchase meat products through New Mexico Grown in the future:

OR Please list reasons why your organization will not purchase meat products through New Mexico Grown in the future:

OR Please list reasons why you aren't sure if your organization will purchase meat products through New Mexico Grown in the future:

Open-Ended Questions:

26. What New Mexico Grown meat products are you most interested in in the future?
27. What worked well during the FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program? Why?
28. What was most challenging for your organization during the FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program? Why?
29. What can be improved upon moving forward to ensure meat buyer needs are met?
30. Please enter any other comments here:

Approved Supplier Meat Vendor Survey

Please answer all survey questions on behalf of your operation.

1. Please type of the name of your operation:
2. What type of operation do you represent? You may select more than one.
 - a. Producer
 - b. Processor
 - c. Distributor
 - d. Food Hub (a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distributions, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products)
 - e. Producer Collective
3. Please select which meat products your operation sold as an approved supplier meat vendor during the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot. You may select more than one.
 - a. Beef
 - b. Bison
 - c. Lamb/mutton
 - d. Pork
 - e. None of the above
4. Please select types of meat products your operation sold as an approved supplier meat vendor during the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program. You may select more than one.
 - a. Fresh meat products
 - b. Frozen meat products
 - c. USDA certified organic meat products
 - d. Grass-fed and/or grass-finished meat products
 - e. Free-range/pasture raised meat products
 - f. Hormone-free meat products
 - g. Other (please specify: _____)
 - h. None of the above

The USDA defines a "Socially Disadvantaged Producer" as a producer who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

5. If you are an individual producer, would your operation be classified as a Socially Disadvantaged Producer?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not applicable
6. If you are not an individual producer (in other words, you are a processor, food hub, distributor, etc.): do you source meat products from Socially Disadvantaged Producers?
 - a. Yes

- b. No
- c. Not applicable

Please rate your operation's satisfaction with the following components of the FY23 (July 2022-June 2023) New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program:

Scale: very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, very satisfied, not applicable

- 7. Recruitment and marketing materials inviting your operation's participation in the program
- 8. Knowledge of Meat Pilot Program goals
- 9. Knowledge of expectations and requirements for participating in the Meat Pilot Program
- 10. Application process to become an Approved supplier meat vendor
- 11. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) registration and inspection process for meat handling and distribution
- 12. Pricing of meat products
- 13. Ability to find interested buyers
- 14. Ease of doing business with meat buyers (including: communications, invoicing, distribution requirements, payment terms)
- 15. Buyer satisfaction with meat products
- 16. Amount of product sold during the Meat Pilot Program (July 2022-June 2023)
- 17. Participation in the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Taste the Tradition/Grown with Tradition Logo Program
- 18. Technical Assistance and support received from the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA)
- 19. Technical Assistance and support received from the NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA)
- 20. Overall experience participating in the FY23 Meat Pilot Program

21. Please expand upon any ratings here:

Please rate your operation's ability to respond to buyer requests during the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot for the following:

Scale: very difficult, difficult, neutral, easy, very easy, not applicable

- 22. Buyer requests for specific meat products
- 23. Volume of meat products **requested** by buyers
- 24. Volume of meat products **purchased** by buyers
- 25. Packaging of meat products
- 26. Transport of meat products

27. Please expand upon any ratings here:

28. Will your operation participate as an New Mexico Grown approved supplier meat vendor in the future?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

29. Please list reasons why your operation will participate as an New Mexico Grown approved supplier meat vendor in the future:

OR Please list reasons why your operation will not participate as an New Mexico Grown approved supplier meat vendor in the future:

OR Please list reasons why you aren't sure if your operation will participate as an New Mexico Grown approved supplier meat vendor in the future:

Open Ended Questions:

30. Briefly describe why your operation participated in the FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program.
31. What worked well during the FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program? Why?
32. What was most challenging for your operation during the FY23 New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program? Why?
33. What can be improved upon moving forward to ensure approved supplier meat vendor needs are met?
34. Please enter any other comments here:

Non-Participating Meat Operation Survey

Please answer all survey questions on behalf of your organization.

1. Please type of the name of your operation:
2. Please select your role within your operation:
 - a. Owner
 - b. Principal operator
 - c. Manager
 - d. Administrator
 - e. Other (please specify: _____)
3. Please select the county in which your operation is located:
Drop-down menu of options
4. What type of operation do you represent? You may select more than one.
 - a. Producer
 - b. Processor
 - c. Distributor
 - d. Food Hub (a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distributions, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products)
 - e. Producer Collective
5. Please select which meat products your operation sells. You may select more than one.
 - a. Beef
 - b. Bison
 - c. Lamb/mutton
 - d. Pork
6. Please select types of meat products your operation sells. You may select more than one.
 - a. Fresh meat products
 - b. Frozen meat products
 - c. USDA certified organic meat products
 - d. Grass-fed and/or grass-finished meat products
 - e. Free-range/pasture raised meat products
 - f. Hormone-free meat products
 - g. Other (please specify: _____)

The USDA defines a "Socially Disadvantaged Producer" as a producer who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

7. If you are an individual producer, would your operation be classified as a Socially Disadvantaged Producer?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

- c. Not applicable
8. If you are **not** an individual producer (in other words, you are a processor, food hub, distributor, etc.): do you source meat products from Socially Disadvantaged Producers?
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - c. Not applicable
9. Was your operation aware of the New Mexico Grown FY23 (July 2022-June 2023) Meat Pilot Program?
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - c. I'm not sure
10. Why did your operation **not** participate in the New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program in FY23 (July 2022-June 2023)? Select all that apply.
- a. We didn't know about the program.
 - b. We weren't interested in participating.
 - c. We couldn't meet requirements (i.e., USDA FSIS certification, product liability insurance, etc.).
 - d. Our meat products didn't meet criteria for being considered "New Mexico Grown".
New Mexico Grown meat products must meet 3 out of 4 criteria: 1) animal was born/raised in NM, 2) animal was fed/finished in NM, 3) animal was slaughtered/processed in NM, 4) animal ownership was maintained by a NM producer.
 - e. We didn't anticipate making a profit.
 - f. We couldn't transport products.
 - g. We didn't have enough supply.
 - h. We already have enough markets.
 - i. Processing issues/bottlenecks.
 - j. Paperwork/administrative burden.
 - k. Other (please specify: _____)
11. Would your operation be interested in participating in the New Mexico Grown Meat Program in the future?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure

Open Ended Questions:

12. Can you tell us more about why your operation did not participate in the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program?
13. What would make your operation more likely to participate in the New Mexico Grown Meat Program in the future?
14. Please enter any other comments here:

Key Informant Interview Guide

Stakeholder Roles and Effectiveness

1. How were you involved in the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program?
 - a. What motivated you to participate?
 - b. How satisfied are you with your participation?

Outreach Process and Expectations

2. How did you first learn about the program?
3. What were your initial expectations for participating in the program?
 - a. Were your expectations met?

Technical Assistance and Support Needs

4. What kind of technical assistance and support were made available to you during the program, particularly from the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and buyers?
 - a. How satisfied were you with the support you received?
5. What additional assistance or support would be helpful to improve the program moving forward?

Successes, Outcomes, and Barriers

6. What were the major successes of the program for you?
7. How has the program impacted hunger and access to nutritious foods in New Mexico?
8. How has the program benefited agriculture and local economies in New Mexico?
9. What were the main barriers or challenges you encountered during your involvement in the program?

Conclusion

10. Is there a story that comes to mind from your experience in the program?

Focus Group Guide

Stakeholder Roles and Effectiveness

1. How were you involved in the New Mexico Grown FY23 Meat Pilot Program?
 - a. What motivated you to participate?
 - b. Reflecting on your contributions and responsibilities, how satisfied are you with your participation?
2. Can you share your observations about the roles other stakeholders played in the program?
 - a. How satisfied are you with their level of involvement?
3. How effective were these roles in achieving the program's goals?
 - a. Tell us about any roles that were particularly effective.
 - b. Tell us about any roles that were particularly unclear or ineffective.

Outreach Process and Expectations

4. How did you find out about the program?
5. What did you think about the information you were provided about the program?
 - a. Did you have enough information to successfully participate?
 - b. What additional information would have been helpful?

Technical Assistance and Support Needs

6. What kind of technical assistance and support were provided during the program, such as from the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and buyers?
 - a. How satisfied were you with this support?
 - b. What support was most helpful?
 - c. What challenges were experienced with the existing level of support?
7. What additional assistance or support would be helpful to improve the program moving forward?

Successes, Outcomes, and Barriers

8. What were the major successes of the program for you?
 - a. What do you think contributed to these successes?
9. How do you think the program has impacted hunger and access to nutritious foods in New Mexico?
10. How has the program benefited agriculture and local economies in New Mexico?
11. What were the main barriers or challenges faced during the program?
 - a. What do you think contributed to these challenges?
 - b. Can you share any examples of how these challenges were successfully addressed?

Conclusion

12. Is there a story that comes to mind from your experience in the program?