

# Hunger in New Mexico's Indigenous Communities

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# LET'S TALK ABOUT HUNGER

Confused by the language of food crises? Learn how to spot them early and understand how your action can help save lives.

## FOOD SECURITY

When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.



<5%

of the population is acutely malnourished



means of earning an income



>15 liters of water per person per day



>2,100 calories per person per day; consistent quantity and quality of food available

## FOOD INSECURITY

When people's access to food is minimally adequate and they have trouble meeting their basic needs.



5-10%

of the population is acutely malnourished



unsustainable means of earning an income



about 15 liters of water per person per day but unstable



2,100 calories per person per day; barely adequate diet

## ACUTE FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD CRISIS

When there is a critical lack of access to food coupled with high levels of acute malnutrition—or when people can meet minimal food needs only by selling essential possessions.



10-15%

of the population is acutely malnourished



serious interruption to the means of earning an income



7.5-15 liters of water per person per day



Unable to meet 2,100 calories per person per day without extreme measures; limited food choices

## HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

When there is a severe lack of access to food, high and increasing acute malnutrition, excess deaths, and people face an irreversible loss of their means of earning an income.



15-30%

of the population is acutely malnourished



critical and irreversible interruption to the means of earning an income



4-7.5 liters of water per person per day



<2,100 calories per person per day; access to 3 or fewer food groups

## FAMINE

When people face a complete lack of access to food and other basic needs and experience mass starvation, death, and destitution.



>30%

of the population is acutely malnourished



complete loss of the means of earning an income



<4 liters of water per person per day



An extreme shortage of calories per person per day; access to 1-2 food groups

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

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To learn more about food crises and how droughts, conflicts, and other hazards can trigger them, visit [OXFAMERICA.ORG/HUNGER](http://OXFAMERICA.ORG/HUNGER).



Food insecurity is when there is a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life.

## FOOD SECURITY

When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.



<5%

of the population is acutely malnourished



means of earning an income



>15 liters of water per person per day



>2,100 calories per person per day; consistent quantity and quality of food available

## FOOD INSECURITY

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# Hunger in New Mexico:

15.2% Food  
Insecurity



321,370 people are facing hunger

1 in 7 people



100,420 children are facing hunger

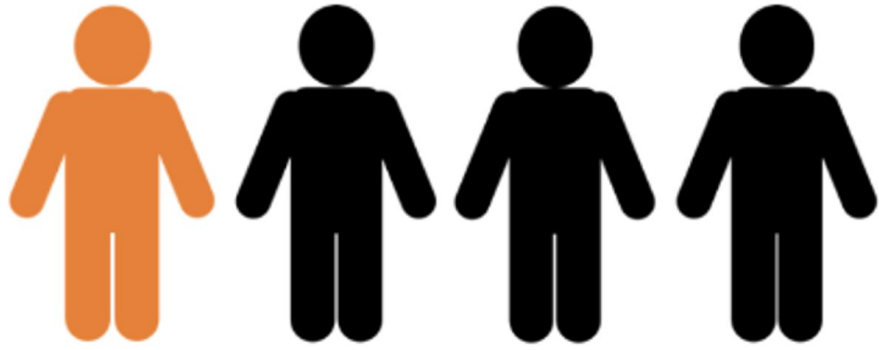
1 in 5 children

## Food Insecurity



**Is twice as common among American Indians living on reservations compared to all US households.**

Source: Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS), Census and USDA/ERS



One in four Native Americans (25%) experience food insecurity

More than twice the rate of White/Non-Hispanic individuals

35% of Native American children or 1 in 3 experience food insecurity





## Challenges Contributing to Food Insecurity in Native Communities:

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- **Poverty:** Native American and Hispanic populations in New Mexico are more likely to be poor or low-income than non-Hispanic white residents.
- **Rural Location:** Native communities often live in rural areas with limited access to full-service grocery stores. For example, the Navajo Nation, the largest Native American reservation, has only 13 grocery stores.
- **Lack of Transportation:** Poor transportation infrastructure, including poorly maintained roads and a lack of public transit, makes it difficult to reach grocery stores, especially in bad weather.
- **Food Access:** Many Native communities live in low food access areas, where fresh produce and nutritious food are limited or expensive. Healthy food tends to cost more on Native reservations.
- **Disruptions to Traditional Food Systems:** Native communities face challenges in maintaining traditional food systems, further exacerbating food insecurity.

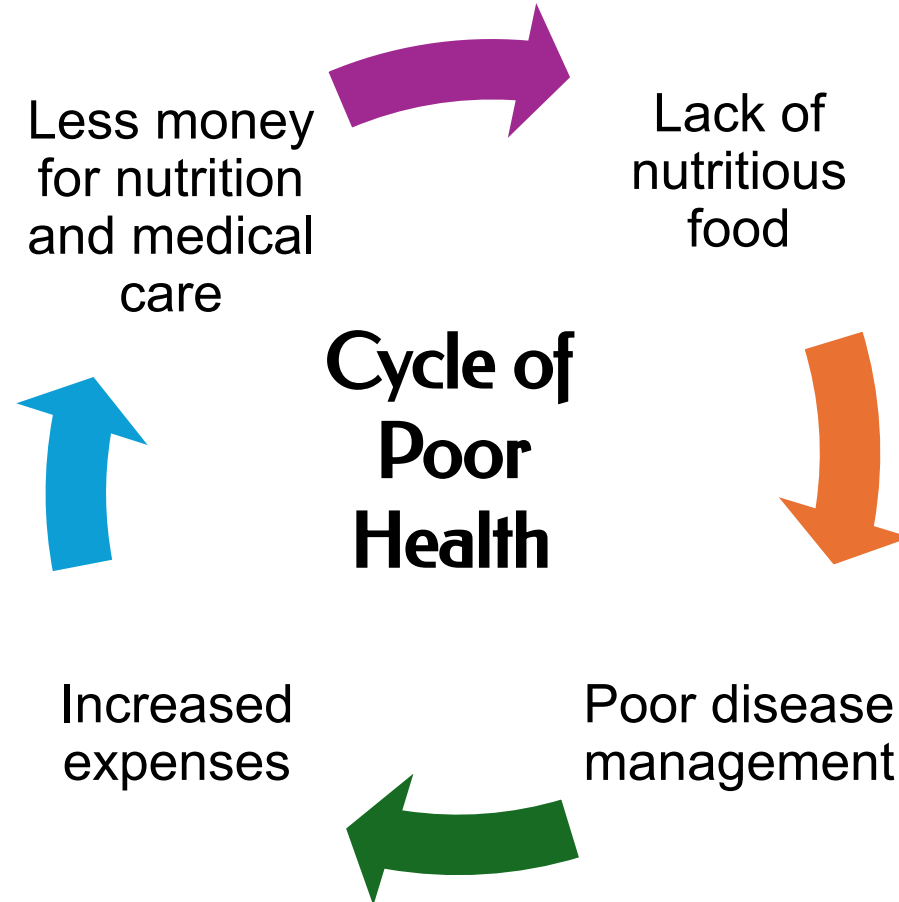


# Intersection of Hunger & Health

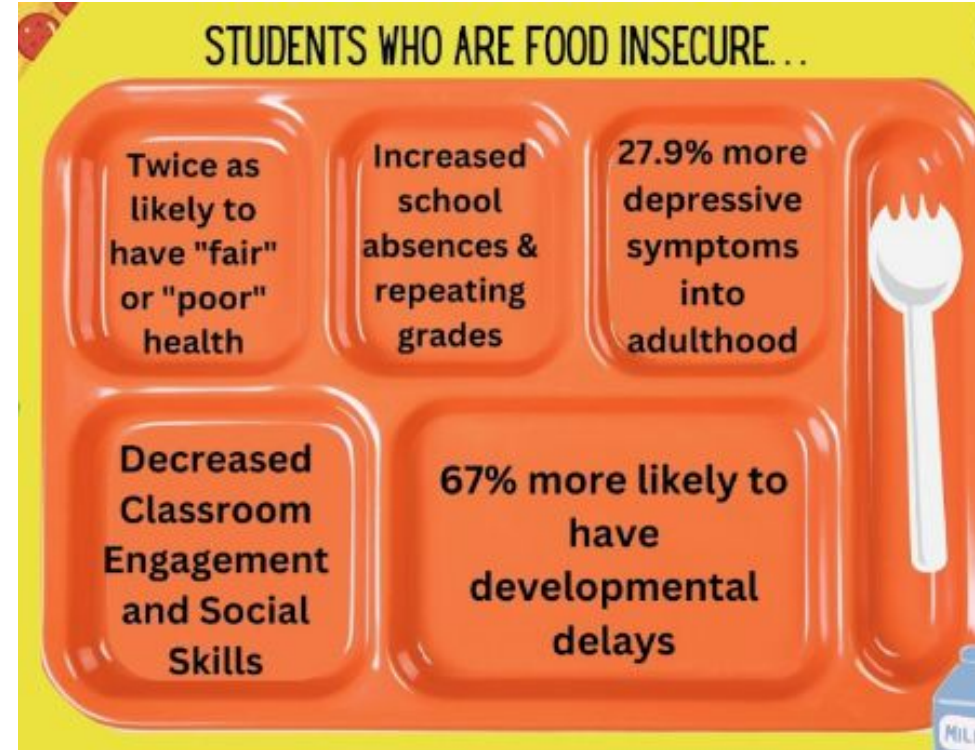
Healthy bodies and minds at every age require nutritious meals

People who are food insecure are at a higher risk of developing:

- Type II Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity



# Overall Impacts:





# Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

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- **Overview:** A federal program authorized by the Farm Bill and administered by the Indian Affairs Department.
- **Program Type:** Operates year-round.
- **Distribution:** Monthly food distributions, typically consisting of pre-boxed items.
- **Eligibility:** Available to income-eligible households (135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines) living on Indian reservations or in designated areas near reservations.

## Participating Native Communities in New Mexico:

- Acoma Pueblo
- Navajo Nation (Crownpoint and Kirtland)
- Zuni Pueblo
- Five Sandoval Pueblos
- Eight Northern Pueblos

## Program Gaps:

- Households cannot receive SNAP benefits if they participate in FDPIR.
- Reliable transportation is required to access distribution sites.
- The food provided is often similar to TEFAP offerings and may lack cultural relevance for Native communities.



# Importance of Food Sovereignty




Food sovereignty is about the right of a people to determine their own policies relative to food and agriculture as opposed to having their food supply subject to market forces.



According to the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance, “Food sovereignty goes well beyond ensuring that people have enough food to meet their physical needs. It asserts that people must reclaim their power in the food system by rebuilding the relationships between people and the land, and between food providers and those who eat.”

# Food Sovereignty in New Mexico

Santa Clara Pueblo has been working to reintroduce indigenous foods into the diets of Tribal elders and connecting them with other sources of food assistance



YAKANAL is engaging the entire Pueblo of Laguna community, from youth to elders, to learn and participate in agricultural practices historically part of the fabric of their society



Jemez Pueblo created a Food Sovereignty Assessment where respondents identified a food bank, tribal garden, educational programming, and seed/farm support as the top tribal programs to help the community gain better access to traditional foods



# Gaps & Challenges







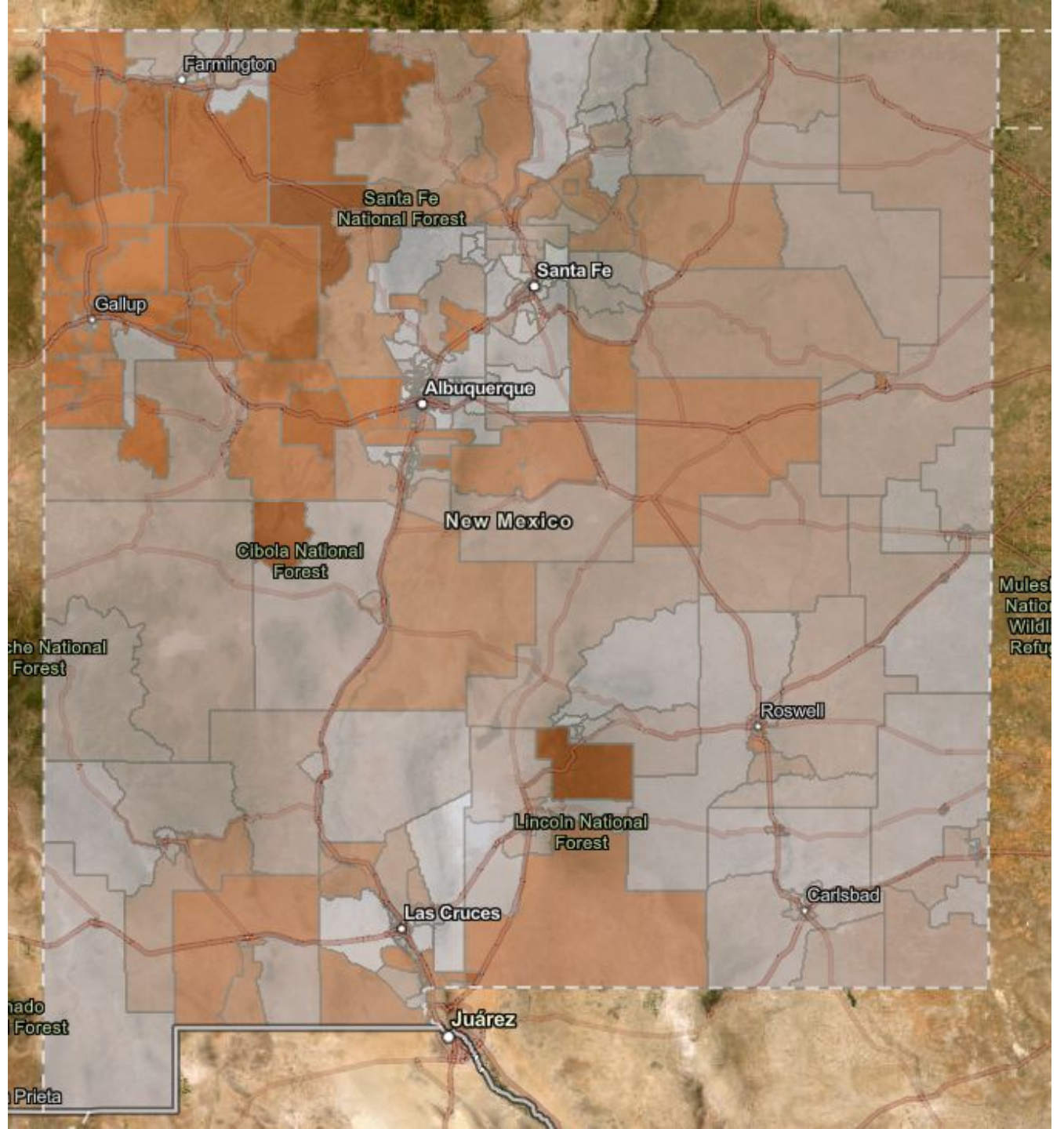
# Lack of Data:

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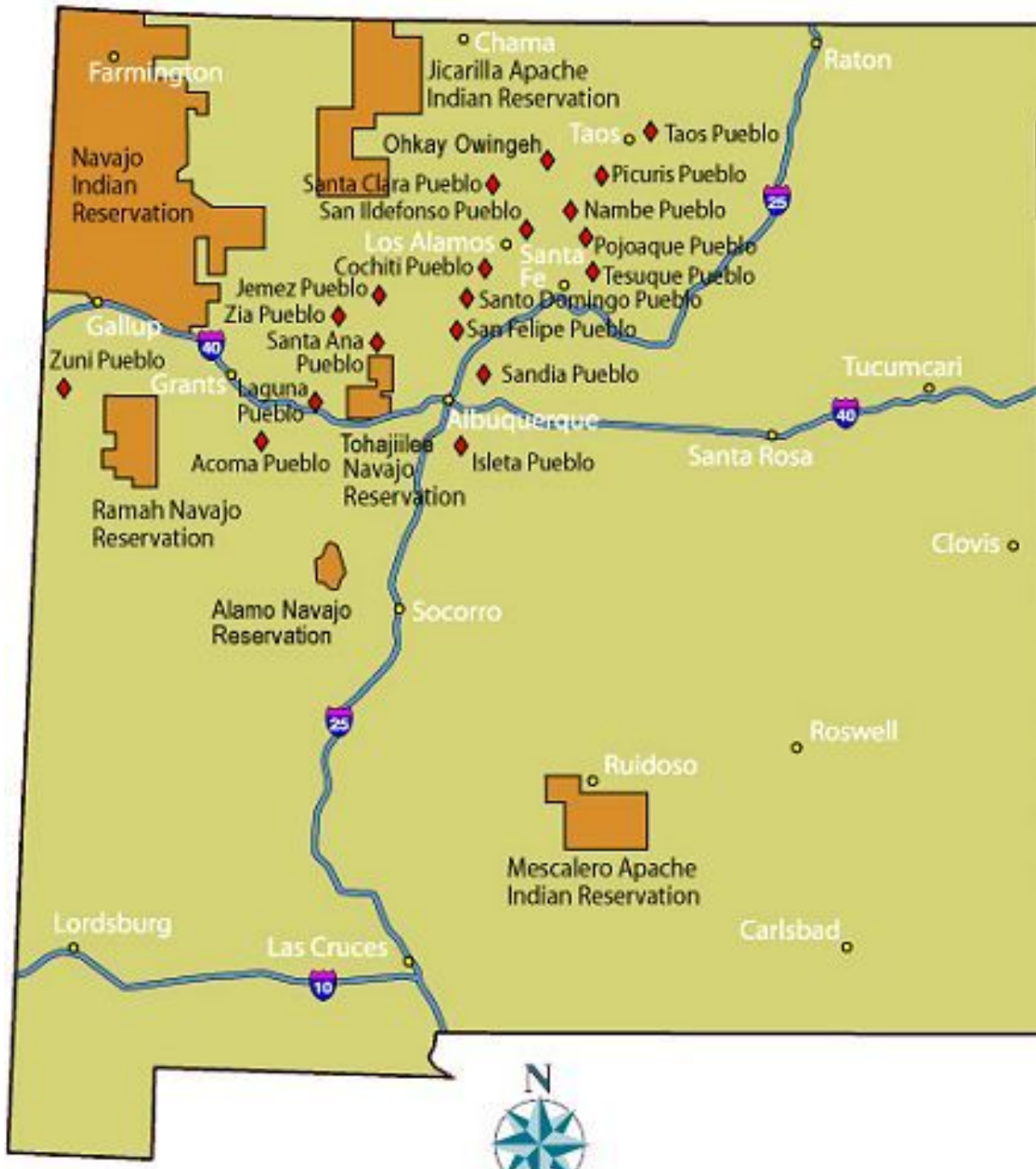
- Food security data for Native American populations in the U.S. is limited, making it difficult to assess the full scope of the issue.
- There is a significant gap in research on food insecurity among urban-dwelling Native Americans.
- New Mexico has the potential to be a national leader by supporting research and funding for Tribal Colleges and Universities, particularly in the areas of food security and nutrition.
- Intentional funding by federal and state entities for Indigenous-led research on nutrition and traditional foods, along with appointing Indigenous scientists to key positions, is crucial for addressing long standing inequities in nutrition policy for Indigenous peoples.



Many Census Tracts within Indigenous Communities Experience the Highest Levels of Need







## New Mexico's Indigenous Communities Partnering with Food Banks:

### Pueblos 12 of 19:

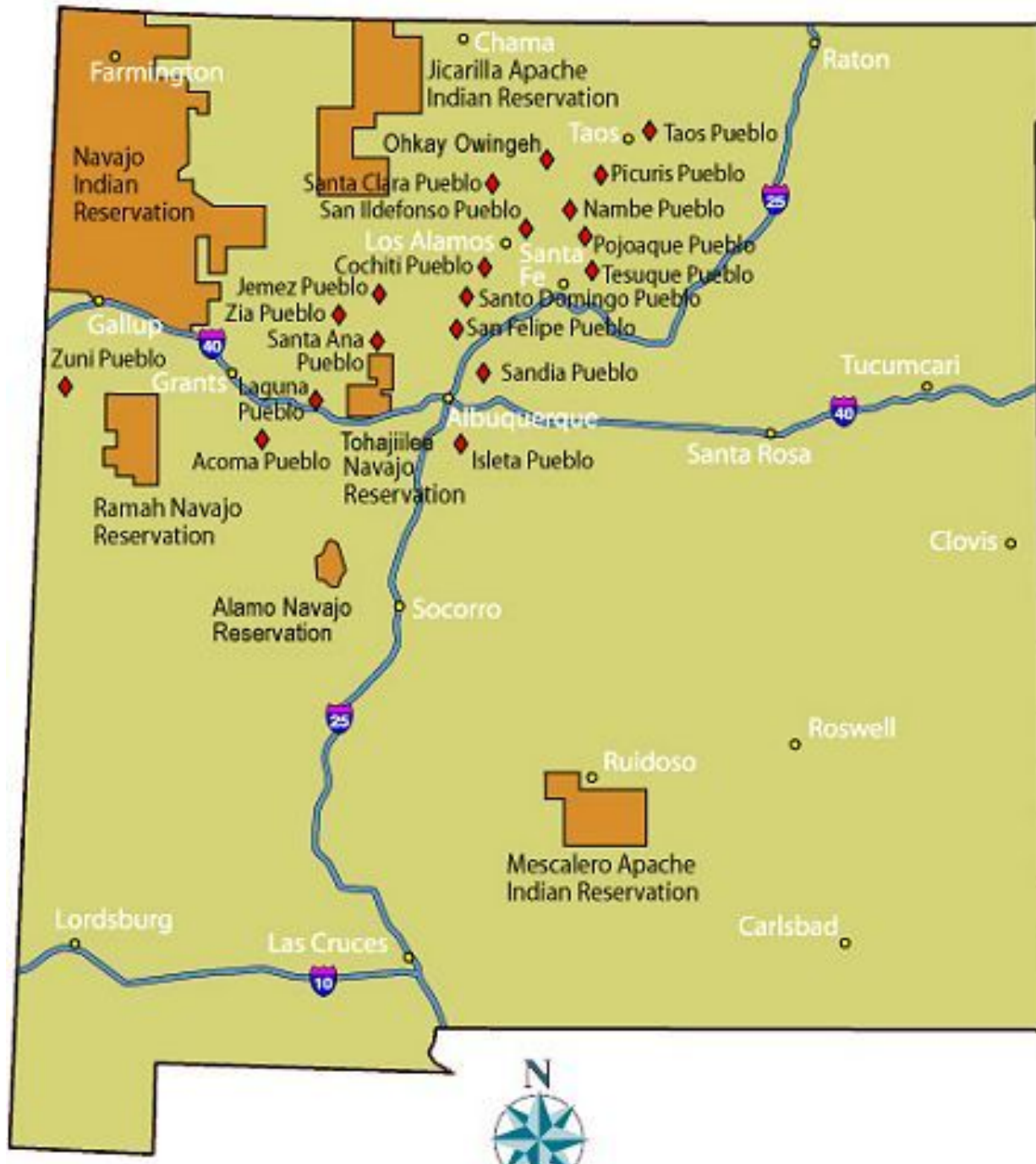
1. Isleta Pueblo
2. Jemez Pueblo
3. Laguna Pueblo
4. Nambe Pueblo
5. Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo
6. Pojoaque Pueblo
7. San Felipe Pueblo
8. San Ildefonso Pueblo
9. Santa Ana Pueblo
10. Santo Domingo/Kewa Pueblo
11. Taos Pueblo
12. Zuni Pueblo

### Of 50 Navajo Nation Chapter Houses in NM:

- 23 have some kind of distribution

### Apache (3 total):

- Jicarilla Apache
- Mescalero Apache



## Service Gaps:

### Pueblos 7 of 19:

1. Acoma Pueblo
2. Cochiti Pueblo
3. Picuris Pueblo
4. Sandia Pueblo
5. Santa Clara Pueblo
6. Tesuque Pueblo
7. Zia Pueblo

### Of 50 Navajo Nation Chapter Houses in NM:

- 27 of the 50

## Testimonials:

“The monthly Mobile Food Pantry here in the Pueblo de San Ildefonso has been going for nearly 24 months. Each month, the pantry provides essential food items to an average of 70 individuals and families in need. We will continue to partner with The Food Depot to help combat hunger in the community, as we see the continued struggle to put nutritious meals on the table far too often.”

**-Raelene Martinez, Diabetes Program Manager at San Ildefonso Pueblo**

### From Anonymous Community Members in the Pueblos:

- "I really enjoy the food from the Mobile Food Distribution. Since I don't receive that much in food stamps, the mobile food distribution helps me a lot and lasts me the whole month."
- "It helped me because of my low income, and sometimes I can't afford to go out to buy groceries."
- "I really appreciate the program; it gives me a lot of nutrition. It's great assistance to those who can't afford groceries."





# Obstacles/Challenges

Access to Water Issues



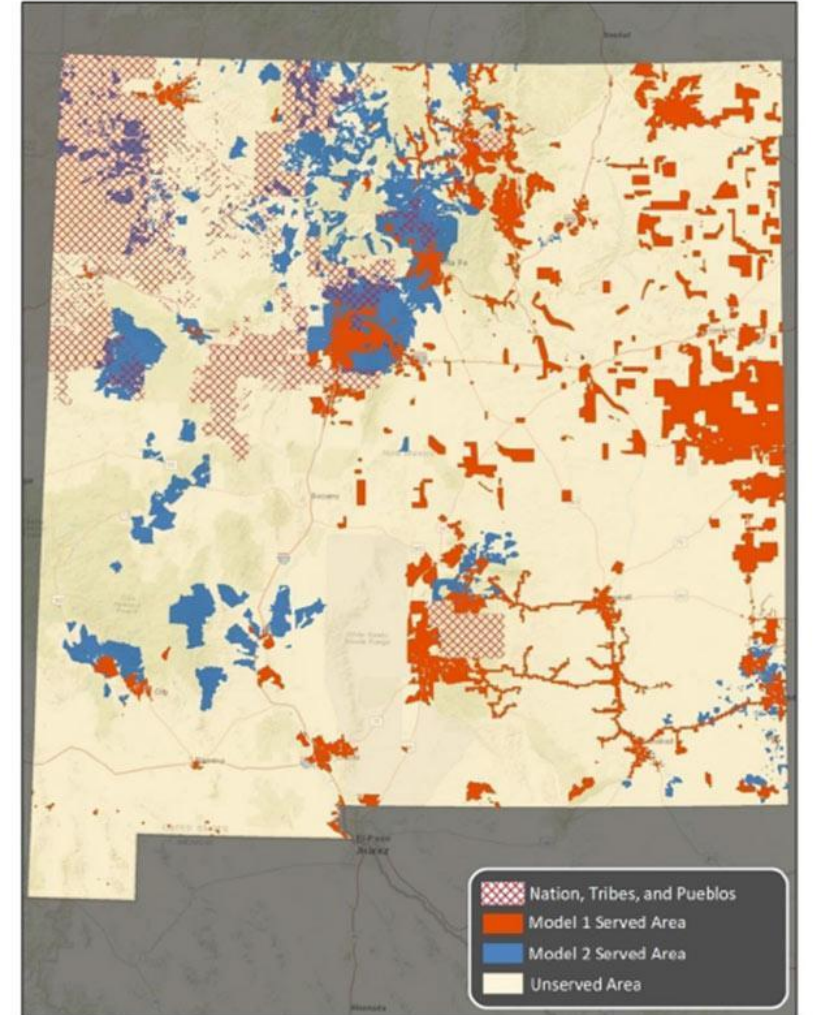
Poor Road Conditions



Lack of Food Access



**LACK OF NECESSARY  
INFRASTRUCTURE**



Lack of Broadband



# Growth Opportunity:

- Expand Food Distributions
- Invest in Food Access Infrastructure
- Invest in Food Sovereignty Projects
- Invest in Unique and Innovative Projects to Address Food Insecurity





# New Mexico Regional Farm to Food Bank:

The Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program in New Mexico, funded by the USDA, operates as the Regional Farm to Food Bank (RF2FB) program. The Food Depot implements the program for the New Mexico Association of Food Banks (NMAFB), with support from state and local partners. The program strengthens local food systems by purchasing fresh, locally produced foods at fair prices to benefit New Mexicans in need. LFPA+ funding was extended in May 2023 and will continue through June 30, 2025.



*The image shows packets of roasted blue cornmeal, purchased from Indigenous farmers and paired with juniper ash, being distributed at ECHO Food Bank in Farmington.*





# Food Is Medicine:

“Food is Medicine (FIM) interventions reflect the critical link between nutrition and health, integrated into health care delivery. These include programs that provide nutritionally tailored meals, groceries, and produce to support disease management, prevention, or optimal health and are linked to the health care system as part of a patient’s treatment plan.”

