

THE FLAVOR OF SUCCESS: SALSA MAKER PREPARES FOR NEW FACILITY WITH HELP FROM NEW MEXICO MEP

ABOUT NEW MEXICO SABOR, LLC. Carla Gallegos-Ortega's homemade salsas were a hit with family and friends for as long as she can remember. In 2017, she entered the Salsa Festival in Albuquerque's Old Town and enlisted her daughter and a few friends to help her produce 16 gallons of salsa in an outdoor tent. She left that festival with an award and the ambition to become a food entrepreneur. Gallegos-Ortega's business, New Mexico Sabor, was launched less than a year later with one part-time employee in an Albuquerque, New Mexico, commercial kitchen that offers hourly kitchen rental. By 2019 with more awards under her belt, Gallegos-Ortega had grown her company from one product marketed at local festivals to a four-product line sold at grocery stores and online.

THE CHALLENGE. New Mexico Sabor continues to produce from a commercial kitchen, where Gallegos-Ortega pays access fees and hourly usage fees, making it imperative that ingredients are ready for each production run and kitchen time is expedited. Equipment and ingredients must be brought from remote locations, adding to the intrinsic inefficiencies of a shared kitchen. These challenges have caused Gallegos-Ortega to consider moving to a facility of her own, where materials can be stored and are readily accessible. For help, Sabor turned to New Mexico MEP, part of the MEP National Network™.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. New Mexico MEP Innovation Director Jeff Abrams observed Gallegos-Ortega and her team at work in the rented kitchen so he could help her develop an inventory control plan and visualize the layout of her own commercial kitchen. His observations led to immediate changes in production processes that saved time. A spreadsheet was created to track inventory used by each of the business's four recipes that minimizes the cash needed for inventory and storage space at the kitchen. A future plant layout was developed that determines minimum building size, footprint, interior structure and materials, plumbing and electrical layout, and HVAC requirements. Interim options to bridge the gap from a shared kitchen to an owned or rented facility were presented.

"[Jeff] showed me that it is a possibility for me to get my own place. I didn't know how much space I would need...he showed me this is doable. The inventory control spreadsheet will help with not only my ingredients but my jars, my lids, everything. MEP's help far exceeded my expectations."

-Carla Gallegos-Ortega, Founder and CEO

RESULTS



20% reduction in kitchen time, equipment rental and staff time led to cost savings



Cut direct expenditures by up to \$320 a month based on current production



Actionable plan with strategic steps that minimize risk of business failure due to growth

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