



NEW MEXICO FIRST
People. Ideas. Progress.

4.2.20 Food & Hunger Advocacy Response to Covid Meeting Notes

Facilitated by: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

In attendance:

Katy Anderson, Roadrunner Foodbank, Interim Manager
Alissa Barnes, ProgressNow New Mexico
Sharon Berman, New Mexico First
Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation
Timothy Davis, NM Center of Law and Poverty
Sharon Finarelli, New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils, Executive Director
Isabelle Jenniches, Healthy Soil Working Group
Derek Lin, NM Voices for Children, Policy Analyst
Jonas Moya, New Mexico First
Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
Jenny Ramo, NM Appleseed
Pam Roy, Farm to Table and the NM Food & Ag Policy Council
Rep. Melanie Stansbury, New Mexico Legislature
Mag Strittmatter, Roadrunner Food Bank, President and CEO
Daniel Valverde, NM Appleseed
Emily Wildau, NM Voices for Children, Policy Analyst

Context/Background:

Representative Stansbury convened the Food Hunger Ag Workgroup last summer. Some of those on the call today have been in the workgroup since its inception. In the last few weeks that group has asked others if they'd like to join and be part of the solution in dealing with the current urgent needs in New Mexico due to the pandemic. The group has been thinking about policy work that needs to be done, identifying coordinated, complementary, and distinct actions taking place and identifying need.

Rep. Stansbury and Lilly have been working over the past week with various people to match make and troubleshoot various categories of work. They identified needs and bucketed them, as follows:

- **Communication** – Melanie and Lilly have been tag-teaming with support from House Speaker's Office. Lilly has deployed press connections out in the world. They are trying to coordinate a strategy to push the word out about the needs we heard on the phone last week.
 - Melanie asked: should we keep up with that drumbeat, keep up with communications?
 - There is a clear need for coordinated communication
- **Food Supply** – The Governor's office states that bulk food issues are being handled by emergency response. Melanie wanted to be sure the dots are connected. Lilly, Pam have been talking about connecting the food suppliers.
 - Melanie asked the group to share where things are needed.
 - In a later related meeting/call, Patty Keane from the Governor's office suggested that if there are unmet emergency food/water needs people should work through their County Emergency Response Manager and copy her. patty.keane@state.nm.us to support a coordinated response. A formal

communication should come out from the Governor's office by 4/7/20. If there are concerns on Tribes and Pueblos, people can work through the Tribal structures and also include Emergency Response Managers and IAD.

- **Volunteer labor** – The group has been pushing out the call for volunteers in the emergency food sector out through the communications piece. There has been communication with the Governor's office about deploying FEMA and the National Guard.
 - Melanie asked the group if they thought deploying FEMA/National Guard was a good idea and if the conversation has been had. This has been part of the response in CA.
 - Melanie noted that she has a team of volunteers, most of whom are retired, intelligent and professional who can be deployed.
- **Funding** – Trying to identify with our funder/partners what is needed at institutional/corporate level, giving, including NGOs and those not connected. We're working with Indian Affairs to discuss getting water out to those on the Navajo reservation, both drinking and bathing water.
- Contributions and Donations are still needed within the existing emergency food system too with an early showing of 40-200% increases in needed supports.
- Representative Stansbury shared this link to Covid-19 Funders in NM after the meeting <https://www.thegrantplantnm.com/resources/covid-19-emergency-grants/>
- **Policy piece** – Regarding the legislative emergency session - how do we make sure we're coordinating with each other to identify priorities to be included in the emergency package. We're trying to help fill gaps and pull threads together that need to be connected.

Q: Anything that you want to point out in terms of bulk supply emergency supply issues and FEMA/National Guard?

- Mag noted that they were seeing significant challenges at Roadrunner. In their efforts to source high-priority shelf-stable product they were understanding the challenges people are up against. They are working hard to find channels and sources of food.
 - Three of their preferred carriers closed down for a month or two, so they've had to go elsewhere to find bulk food for the food bank. Roadrunner is responsible for providing food to a 16-county area and 50 + agencies to feed hungry New Mexicans.
 - 20% of their existing agencies have closed, some temporarily and some permanently, adding an additional responsibility to ensure coverage in areas where the community agencies no longer function. The agencies are shutting down due to lack of funding and/or lack of volunteers. We're sitting on an inventory amount that we are carefully watching.
 - They are having to find backup plans and additional mobile food pantries. That means identifying other partners in those areas to provide feeding events and working out transportation.
 - It has been a challenge to ensure they have access to large quantities of a wide variety of high quality, healthy product.
 - They've talked to the Governor's Office about the National Guard. They are partnering with Aging & Long Term Services re. feeding for seniors. Because of the virus and issues around contact, they have to use their mobile units, requiring that they prepack boxes, rather than doing it farmer's market style. They need organizations to box the food, and then distribution takes place drive-through style.
 - They have additional expenses around boxes, tape, and being able to supply it.
 - They are looking upstream for opportunities to bulk purchase good food. They have made some recent purchases but are not sure how long those supplies will exist.
- Tim said the Center of Law and Poverty was looking at federal legislation and gaps in state policy and were working on handouts to let people know what's available. They are focusing on identifying gaps that existed through first 3 rounds, and making sure they get addressed the 4th round. He invited the group to get the word out about what's changed and what's available. The handouts will be simple and will cover top line

issues such as changed regulations for childcare and first responders. Co-pays will be waived. Regulations regarding changing providers is changing and requiring in-person interviews is waived. Recertification requirements have changed.

- Melanie shared via chat box the language for Nancy Pelosi's press release about the package, which is extremely time sensitive. Highlights include clean water, broadband and mobility structure, all COVID-related. It would supply additional money that would impact what everyone does. Melanie urged the group to compile a list of urgent needs. She said she would be happy to forward them on.
 - **Please review the press release [here](#).**
- Jenny noted that commitment has been strong to feed kids and that NM Appleseed has been able to get waivers from USDA, such as serving multiple meals at once or multiple days of meals at once. Now people can take the meals home.
 - They are answering many questions from districts. PED and CYFD have been great partners and she said they'd like to see them work together more.
 - The schools are working at an incredible pace. There is a lot of planning to do regarding summer providers and figuring out when the baton getting handed off. They want to prevent time when there won't be feeding programs. We're having weekly meetings with PED and student nutrition association.
 - Jenny added that there is a silver lining to having more staff – there's an injection of more participants in SNAP, and schools can feed more kids for free. Daniel is working on mapping the 700 sites, which will help them look at the summer bridge for gaps.
 - They secured \$100 million in the last packet for tribes and are working on how that funding is going to be allocated. Right now families don't have food and water. Their grocery bills and needs have gone up.
 - Jenny has been working on EBT, which has been expanded. She wants to be sure there is a plan and assumes HSD is working on this. She noted that New York is requesting \$7 per kid per day off.
 - There are communication/press needs – we need to get the word out about pandemic EBT and SNAP. Could there be better coordination of the applications with the food drop-off sites?
 - They've been working on McKinney-Vento. There is no state plan to address the 8,000 homeless kids, who under federal law have the right to equal access to education.
 - Mag said that she and Jenny could connect offline about that. **If anyone else is working in the homeless space, please connect with Jenny at jramo@nmappleseed.org.**
 - Lilly gave kudos to NM Appleseed for the significant win in terms of \$640k getting grid off copays for students experiencing significant need, in addition to half a million dollars for securing food with a stable shelf life.
- Derek noted that NM Voices are were diving into the federal packages, researching flexibility to apply for state options. Safety net is their focus.
 - They will put out a blog next week on SNAP and a little on TANF, next week. It will address state options based on the current packages, and where they fall short. The blog will focus broadly on the safety net and will highlight gaps and solutions to provide for those who aren't covered by the two packages.
 - They are also working on providing more cash in the hands of families.
 - They are planning to release a policy brief about COVID relief efforts. The brief will highlight collaboration with national partners, an overview of what states are doing, and an exploration of different opportunities for New Mexico.
 - **Derek will share the link to the blog and brief when they are available, and the group can share with their networks.**

- Alissa said that at ProgressNow NM they work mostly in the digital realm. They are currently uplifting the message across the state about the needs at the food banks regarding the urgent lack of funds and volunteers. They have shared the graphics from the Speaker's Office, and received info from food banks that they inserted into a blog post so they can consistently link back to that page. The language is awaiting approval from the food bank this afternoon. ProgressNow has a large email network, and will ask their network to engage.
- Carlos and Ellen said that at the Interfaith Hunger Coalition, they are keeping abreast of events and are sharing the volunteer information. **Carlos said that they would help spread the news by sharing links to blogs.**
- Pam noted that Farm to Table and the NM Food & Ag Policy Council were focusing on emergency challenges, existing policy, challenges to people needing food, and coordinated response during special session.
 - She added that within federal legislation, there are provisions for small-scale farmers' markets. She said they had asked congressional leadership to co-sign.
 - She noted that in SB 3548, it did not clarify how the USDA would deploy funds into those specific categories. She said they are following up on how those resources might be applicable to New Mexico, such as making sure funds for aging & long term services and school food services were maintained.
 - At very local level Pam said that there is more coordination around farmers, who are losing market options due to social distancing. Farmers' markets are considered essential and are having to adapt rapidly to being open and how that looks.
 - Example: the Santa Fe Farmers' Market has formed a CSA and is making boxes.
 - There's a project underway using GIS to map out distribution and local services to help figure out how to coordinate more directly.
- Sharon Finarelli noted as she had just become the Executive Director of the New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils this week, she was mainly apprised of news from Sierra County, where migrant workers were uncomfortable coming into town. She wondered about provisions for seniors or homeless who don't have access to transportation to receive boxes.
 - Mag replied that there were none, unless larger groups emerge that can help take that food and do distributions. She added that Roadrunner was working with Aging and Long term Services to distribute to hub locations, from which they are doing door-to-door delivery. She noted that they were still waiting for solutions to emerge.
 - Regarding stable shelf life food Mag said that depending on what happens with the especial session, she hoped it would emerge in HB 2, to be available in July for agencies for new inventory.

Funding

- Melanie shared the latest information that had been provided to members of legislative finance committees. The upshot is that we're OK until the end of this fiscal year, and even have more revenue than was expected. However, there will be a rescope on budget beginning July 1, because the oil price has dropped significantly. They are estimating a \$1 billion shortfall (out of a budget of \$7 billion). Melanie added that they might not have to cut programs but that they might have to freeze them. She suggested this group may want to highlight priorities of what to improve and what to increase.
- Bryan said that at the Thornburg Foundation, they are trying to connect with funders around covid response funding. On policy advocacy front, he noted that lot of their partners were working towards the 2021 session.

- Bryan noted that as conversations move forward, it could be useful to not only think about what could be part of the special session, but also to highlight long term systemic needs looking forward to the 2021 session.
- Bryan said that Thornburg was currently trying to coordinate with funders engaged in food systems, both on food access and support to farmers, and supply chains, to see where they might be able to do something jointly together.
- Melanie wondered if there was a central contact for these smaller pantries and smaller orgs that need support.
- Bryan noted that the Santa Fe Community Foundation has a Health & Wellbeing and Food Security Covid Fund, limited to 4 counties. [See link below]
- Lilly added that while the New Mexico Foundation has a fairly modest amount of money, they're in a position to take in money and distribute it, including to tribal and rural communities statewide. She said that the First Nations Development Institute has between \$300-600K. They are ramping up. Both organizations are identifying hotspots and looking into leveraging resources. Contact info@firstnations.org

Funders and contact information:

- Santa Fe, Mora, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba counties:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4q54B2djvpl-zOWgLJMOHzQdA-eDh3s6ioSDj7j_LTt_WA/viewform
 - Statewide and Tribal/Pueblo JoAnn Melchor, jmelchor@nmfoundation.org
 - Tribal/Pueblo Jackie Franck, info@firstnations.org
- Melanie: This is going to become increasingly importance over the coming weeks. **She asked members who have connections to national funders, to tell them we have emergency funding needs in NM, and we have the capacity to move dollars through local community foundations.** She noted that New Mexico is a national hotspot. "So any of you working with national funders, please put the call out for help. We'll work with the state community foundations to make that as streamlined as possible."
 - If you know those who need emergency funding, Lilly and I will be contact people for now to help coordinate. There is money out there. Let's help

Next steps

Meetings

- The next general, statewide meeting will be next Thursday, April 9, 12-1:30. **Please join or have someone else join from your organization.**
- The group agreed that it would be ideal to meet every other week, at the same time (every other Thursday from 12 – 1:00 pm). **The next meeting of this workgroup will take place on April 16, noon – 1 pm.**
 - Pam noted that CDFA is doing a [food systems disaster recovery webinar](#) from 12-2 April 16 and wanted folks to be aware because it would land during the same time as this call.

Communication

- **As everyone develops communication about policy, please share with each other and with Lilly.**

Funding

- **If you have contacts and can help coordinate, please be in touch and help share that information.**
- Melanie asked if there was someone on this call who could be a volunteer point of contact to coordinate on the federal disaster relief package, as the federal emergency package was being drafted right then. **Pam said she would follow up.**
- Lilly said that if NM First gets information, they'll share it out.
- **Jenny said they had sent out an email to all their donors asking them to give to the food banks and encouraged everyone to do that too.**

Lilly thanked the group for attending the meeting and noted that the more coordinated we can be in this time, the better.