

## 4.6.2020 Food/Hunger Community Response

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, NM First

Notes: Sharon Berman, NM First

In attendance:

- Alissa Barnes, Progress Now
- Steve Burstein, Volunteer with Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Melanie Stansbury, NM Legislature
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Sonya Warwick, Roadrunner Food Bank

### Context

Melanie: Keeping us glued together, for your leadership, coordination skills. We are convening so we can have some laser focus on coordinating communications for food/hunger/ag/water relief efforts. For media outreach and also generating content for social media and press releases to get out our calls to action. New Mexico First put together a press release, we helped amplify it. One of the things I'd like to get out of the call today is what's our call to action in the next week and a half? I've been working with the State Dept. of Indian Affairs and the Governor's Office to pull together list of water and food needs for the Navajo Nation. Santa Fe Community Foundation is going to help

**I'd like to suggest that we put out the call through media push, national news articles about food/water emergency needs at the Navajo Nation. Especially for funder coordination, get the word out to funders.**

Sherry: we've been more localized. We've set up a covid-19 page on our website, telling people how they can help, Social media covered well. A lot of local media attention. Also local radio interviews. When Millie Bobbie Brown made donation to Food Depot, that garnered national attention in places like E! Entertainment. Usually we work with local media outlets.

Lilly – have you had uptick in volunteers, corporate sponsorships?

Sherry: it has been phenomenal. We've been tracking our disaster response. We're at about \$350,000 now for expenses – food, renting trucks, temps, supplies such as boxes. We've spent close to that right now. We've been fortunate that the press coverage has enhanced our different activities around fundraising. We've talked a lot in our interviews about the needs to fund and how we've had to increase purchases from emergency demands. Individuals and corporate support. **My concern: we can't sustain that level of fundraising if this goes on for a long time.**

**Melanie: Sherry, what are you hearing across the state about folks' needs? Do we need to keep up that drumbeat for volunteers and funds? Message to broader community?**

Sherry: yes, food and volunteers. My concern is, long term, as things get more and more severe, I just don't know if volunteers will continue to come out. We were talking at the food bank, if we lose volunteers, we may have to shut down. It takes so much labor to pack the boxes ahead of time to

prepare for the drive through food pantries. I don't know how we'll continue to distribute. When we started losing our volunteers early on, we've had others respond due to the state putting out the word. I don't want it to run out in the middle of the crisis, not be able to do what we need to do.

**Melanie: How is your communication with Governors office, to see if EO can provide waiver with the National Guard?**

Sherry – we did put in a request the help of the National Guard. **We received a response that they National Guard was spread too thin.** I also heard – this may not be correct – that we only have 80 people in the NM National Guard. We've sent in a request for additional help as volunteers drop off later on.

Lilly – the message is – yay NM, way to turn out your pocketbooks. Keep the message, “Yes, and.”

Sherry – We like to show them what they're getting for their donation. Polling the food banks and food pantries around the state, and figuring out how many people we're serving across the state. We show results and say, we're not done yet, this is a crisis that continues.

Lilly – the numbers seem to be changing daily. We had anywhere from 40% to 200% increase. The need is tremendous. **Do you think we need the nitty-gritty specifics – how many people have you served?**

Sherry – we can give that information pretty easily by talking to our partners. In Santa Fe, we have so many people lining up at the major food distribution that we're having major traffic backup and we've had people call the police and complain. We're helping between 3,000 and 3500 people per distribution.

Lilly – **if you let us know the number, we will share it.** If you need assistance, such as getting data, let us know.

Sherry – **the food banks have a conference call every Wednesday morning at 9:00. I can ask them to help us access those number easily.**

Melanie – I don't want to create extra work. If the food banks have a way to quantify – **was there a jump in volunteers, x number of volunteers is what we'll need, that would be helpful to build a communications challenge again.**

Sherry – I'll bring that up on our call.

Melanie – even WAG – Wild Assed Guess – is good!

Alyssa: I have a couple of thoughts I think would be helpful. Sherry, without putting extra work on you...when I'm thinking about the fact that the rally is great at first. The messaging campaign we used in 2008-2009, and being able to create messaging around the fact that this is ongoing and quite possibly long after we get covid under control. **There will likely be traumatic response from folks. Possibly great change in response from volunteers and also traumatic effects on our clients. Thinking about that kind of story, how we can get that messaging now.**

Alyssa: there was so much conversation with the Governor's office and state agencies prior to this. **I wonder if there's a way for state agencies in working from home, if that could be part of the long-term volunteer solutions and if Mariana children's cabinet can help.**

Alyssa: Wanted to get a short rewrite of the information Sonia provided. It would be helpful if we could get the Governor's office to put something out. The people we rely on for volunteerism and donations are of a higher economic status and pay attention to the news and the Governor's communications. Food & security is one of her priority areas – if her office could create a graphic, or we create one and share it out. Being able to share something from her office would help us get a lot more traction

Melanie – I could reach out to Nora to see if they could do a food & hunger message. If we could bring them a media tool kit and ask them if they're willing to do it, would be much easier?

Alyssa – we would be happy to do that on the back end. In 6 months – food banks may be very much in dire need, depending on how this goes. I almost feel like we have to wait a little bit and see how this shakes out.

Melanie – the SF community foundation is the host foundation for the covid response the governor announced. They have pledges of over \$1,000,000 but it's not set up yet. It might make sense to pair them up. **Maybe what we need is a media plan. I know we' have limited bandwidth. This week, next week, Three weeks from now.**

Lilly – First message: thanks for rallying and we're going to need you for the long haul. What goes into plan for next few weeks, and agenda items for future calls?

Sonya – I would echo what Sherry said. If we're going to see job losses happen, we're going to see more than we've already seen. Keep supporting your local food bank or food something organization

**Melanie: should I ask our tech-savvy young folks to look into creating infographics?** Part of what we were thinking to continue drumbeat if is everyone had branded stuff – we could send stuff out to people so they didn't have to make it up. I could ask our communications to refine.

Lilly: about 15,000 saw it and we had good response. The only thing that might have made it visually appealing was more embedded images. **Maybe good to add: we're really doing this together – keep it up.**

Steve: I'm a volunteer and helped Lilly and others from NMF get emails out. The data is being updated. I'm most curious to know if there's a top-down approach we may have been missing, Should the food banks be the recipients of donations and volunteers?

Sonya: If the food banks are struggling, our partner agencies are struggling even more. I've been encouraging folks to reach out to local food agencies.

Steve – the food banks don't distribute funds to local agencies?

Sonya – my understanding is, not by and large except in specific instances.

Sherry – I agree with Sonya. We can't take on that extra work right now. We have done micro-granting but now is not the time to do it.

Lilly – we like to think both/and rather than either/or. It's a nested approach – all of them will be impacted. It's not to muddy message: **feeding people is complicated.** We've had calls from philanthropy – funders and funder consultants, and asking what we are doing in the state, and how to get the funds out the door quickly? The S.F. Foundation and the NM Foundation have relationships set ups in rural in

tribal locations, as is the First Nations Development Institute. How can we be sure there's coverage and when things come up we can address it.

Lilly – if we're communicating in a way that's annoying, we want to know and adjust appropriately.

Sonya – I know our community initiatives dept has been meeting regularly with the network Roadrunner uses, training on how to do the drive-through setup.

Steve – that sounds really important. Wendy at SHARE NM is in the process of contacting all the pantries. There could be a lot of coordination.

Sonya – we do a lot of that with our network.

Lilly – on our end, SHARE NM is a project of NM First. We have a resource directory. It's up to date – it's open source and people are able to update their information. There will be folks who are and who aren't in your network. I can only imagine what it's like coordinating on the ground every day when you're working systems issues and direct need. We don't want to bury you in requests for technical assistance, but we do want to know where to direct folks. What would be helpful and supportive vs. annoying and burying?

Sonya – Right now, I don't know.

Alyssa – I'm not a rep of the food bank anymore. For context – I've worked with Wendy at SHARE for many years. For the most part, if there are organizations that are serious about feeding, they are working at the food bank. If you are getting organizations that are reaching out to NM First, you can pretty safely direct them to whoever their food bank is, because they're probably already working with them.

Lilly – **I think there is more grassroots community response, primarily in tribal and rural communities.** The government response is not happening quickly enough so the community is organizing to take care of each other. They're wanting to do it in a way that doesn't create unintended negative consequences. **I am wondering where to send them.**

Sonya: We need to have discussion internally with the food banks – do we have capacity to train people outside our network, and what does that look like?

Sherry: There is talk about starting food distribution without checking to see what is already in their community. We've had a handful of communication like that. Those small communities aren't talking to each other. I haven't been annoyed with you, Lilly. **I want to be sure to connect people who are doing something with the person who doesn't think things are going on.**

Alyssa – there are places that are significantly underserved, so identifying resources is crucial.

**Q: Are there specific things you want and need from folks other than the identified needs of volunteers and funds, that need to be on people's radar?**

Sonya: Our three buckets: Give funds, give time or give food.

Sherry – we are encouraging people to give funds and volunteer. We haven't been encouraging donations of food, because we don't have the capacity. We don't know the science about the safety of the food.

Lilly – the infographic but also – share with your neighbors.

**Q: Next steps to lift up and amplify work food banks and food response folks are doing?** Ideas about how to keep that drumbeat alive so we don't lose momentum?

Sonya – tie it to unemployment. People have been laid off or are concerned. That is a trigger for many folks. So many people living paycheck to paycheck.

Alyssa – making sure that, as we're sending out communication, we're talking about the food banks and the food are safe. To Sonya's point that everyone's starting to get laid off is due to safety precautions. Food banks have always been safe and they're still safe. Also, I'm going to do what Sonya tells me to do!

Lilly – is it helpful to have Melanie offer to help coordinate with the Speaker's office? Is that messaging that you want them or other allies to help with, or do you want to do it and push out the messaging?

Sonya - I think it's better if it comes from the community and is not driven by the food banks. I'm willing to review things, but in terms of putting stuff out for other people to attach their names to, gives a helpful perspective. Who speaks food bank?

Steve: is anyone doing a projection based on unemployment being a driver and demand?

Sonya – very good insight. Not sure of that answer.

Lily – that would be a great question for Patty Keane at the Governor's office. Would you like me to follow up with Patty?

Steve – that would provide structure – it would be a range, obviously.

### **Next steps:**

**The group agreed to meet every other week** unless something urgent comes up. And if something urgent comes up, members will let everyone know.

Lilly – anyone else who could help this work?

Sherry – I'm willing to get on the phone with food banks if Sonya tells me to.

Lilly – People's stories and community stories are motivating to me. So if there are ways that, it would be helpful for people to share their stories with you. It is powerful. The local stories are really powerful. We don't want to take advantage in an ugly way of people, but it can be a beautiful way to get people to act. If you have ideas of how to connect those dots, in a way that can be used for the greater good, please let us know.

Sherry – there is an option on our website that anyone can share their stories at any time. You could access that anytime.

Lilly – any other ways to keep people at the center when communicating about the impact?

**Our next meeting – April 20, 3:30 – 4:30 pm**

Lilly: We'll send out notes with a calendar invite for 2 weeks. If you would like others to be included in the conversation, let us know.