

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Workgroup
General Action Team
10.22.20 ♦ 12-1:30 pm
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Katy Anderson, Roadrunner Food Bank,
- Sabrina Apodaca, Los Ranchos Agri-Nature Center
- Andrew Baker, Health Action NM
- Zak Barela, NMDA
- Jane Braithwaite, Office of Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Molly Callaghan, Office of Congresswoman Deb Haaland
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation
- Tim Davis, NM Center on Law and Poverty
- Tyler Eshleman, NM Coalition to Enhance Working Lands
- Zoey Fink, National Young Farmers Coalition
- Josey Foo, Indian Country Grassroots Support
- Bruce Hinrichs, NMSU Extension
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot and NM Association of Food Banks
- Kyle Jim, Diné Introspective
- Derek Lin, New Mexico Voices for Children
- Judy Messal, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Denise Miller, NM Association of Farmers' Markets
- Roy Montibon, The Montibon Company
- Dr. Amanda Montoya, The Chamiza Foundation
- Christina Morris, NMDOH
- Andrea Nash, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, NM Thrives and Covenant Pathways
- Victoria Quevedo, La Semilla Food Center
- Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-New Mexico
- Valerie Rangel, NM Environmental Law Center
- Anna Rondon, NM Social Justice Equity Institute
- Tiffany Rivera, NM Farm & Livestock Bureau
- Stephanie Rogus, NMSU
- Pam Roy, Farm to Table, NM Food and Ag Policy Council
- Brie Sillery, NM Coalition to End Homelessness
- Representative Melanie Stansbury
- Trista Teeter, Food is Free ABQ
- Emily Wildau, New Mexico Voices for Children

Lilly went over the history of the group and the context in which we are working. (Please refer to the “overview” tab on [the website](#) for more information on the history of the policy working group.) Lilly added that it would be valuable to hear from each person on the call about what they are seeing about how COVID is playing out in terms of access to food and water in their communities or in the communities they work with the most.

I Check-in- All

- a) Sabrina said there was not a lot of access to food and that there were food deserts in Southern Albuquerque.
- b) Judy lauded her community’s work with Family Promise, which gives people places to stay. She admired the hardworking staff who are trying hard to keep people going during the pandemic.
- c) Kurt said they have numerous emergency grants in front of them regarding support for food banks and other organizations providing food to communities during the dramatic uptick in the need. “It’s real and it’s an incredible challenge.”

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- d) Pam said they are seeing the challenges around people accessing food in schools because schools have had to shift gears locally in the way appropriate for them.
- e) Bryan shared a concern about where we are with COVID and the next several months, with potential increases in food insecurity and needs, especially if federal assistance doesn't come. He also had concerns about how best to support ag producers to shift to this new reality and market dynamic.
- f) Josey said they received their last Shamrock food distribution the day before, working with Echo Food Bank. They were making a distribution the same day as the meeting for the first time to Nageezi. Regarding local produce, squash was ending, and next phase would be corn. The last 270 melons would be distributed with the boxes. For the winter months, there are no greenhouses. She noted that most parents with little ones have chosen to keep them at home. Choice Wireless had a cap - 4 months of free internet to families. Without the internet it would be difficult to do Zoom meetings, and the lines were very congested. Her staff is calling families and telling them about the internet caps. She added that it will be disappointing for those who have opted to keep their children at home to protect the elders. She brought attention to challenges due to caps and limitations as we go into winter months.
- g) Trista said they had a decrease in their home harvest. One bonus is that their farm partnerships have seen a big increase, including creativity in ways to get their excess out to the community. Food is Free ABQ runs an annual seed share. Last year they were able to supply 5000 packets of seeds from seed suppliers' grants. But they don't anticipate the grants will be available again this year and are encouraging people to save as much of their seeds as they can.
- h) Bruce noted that agents in every extension office in every county are working hard, listening and trying to figure out where they can fill needs in communities, be it education on production, health, etc. They are focused on connecting resources with those who need it.
- i) Valerie shared that she had recently transitioned to the NM Environmental Law Center, work in the environmental justice arena. The last she heard from the New Mexico Foundation was that there was great community needs for firewood. Many folks are also relying on coal or need to refill their propane tanks. Support was also needed for smaller food banks in rural areas.
- j) Sherry said they are seeing the numbers rise. The numbers at drive throughs, food pantries and direct distribution are the same as early in the pandemic. Hotels received a contract to feed 14 Santa Fe schools they'll be meeting this week to figure out the plan. The numbers are coming in for next year re. TFA (emergency assistance program through USDA farm bill). Food had come in through trade mitigation funds as well as USDA. As with a lot of federal funds going out to help local food banks and other nonprofits, that ends in December. Sherry said they are anticipating a huge cut in 2021 to TFAP food at a time where hunger relief organizations are experiencing rises in numbers while they continue the response.
- a. Rep. Stansbury hoped there had been a write up. Sherry said they had just received the info from Steve Chavez in Health & Human Services. The Food Depot intended to speak to legislators, and she knew that Roadrunner had it on their agenda to bring up with Sen. Heinrich's office.
- k) Denise said they were seeing the SNAP sales go very high on the consumer side. Grocery sales were going up—people were clearly buying food at the local outlets. She added that this was almost a real-time way of



tracking. There is uncertainty for markets next year regarding whether they will have to continue to restrict participation at farmers' markets by 25%. She noted that for producers, there was a lot of uncertainty and a lot of infrastructure needs. Denise spoke with Rep. Armstrong, who had discussed Double Ups Food Bucks Program with Legislative Finance Director David Abbey. Rep. Armstrong said Mr. Abbey had sounded pessimistic about increased money for Double Up Food Bucks. His response was, "There is money at NMSU." Denise was not sure where the NMSU money was located. She added that it would be a good thing to find out if this is a priority for the Governor, to put this on her call.

- l) Stephanie has spoken with people nationally and heard there were concerns about stockpiling happening in the near future. She is thinking about conducting a 2nd round of her survey. She added that they are having a free webinar (academy of nutritional dietetics) on November 9, at which she will be reporting on results of her survey. More details regarding the webinar:
 - a. **Topic:** Food Security and Hunger Initiatives in NM. **Date/Time:** Nov 9, 2020, 7:00 PM MT. **Details:** The webinar will include an update about licensure sunset, followed by Stephanie Rogus (presenting on her current Food Security research) and Patty Keane (presenting about her Hunger Initiatives work at the state level). The presentations will be followed by 15-25 minutes of breakout sessions. Register in advance for this meeting: <https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUtd-GgrzlvEtXt0-mlhriZOR1l6HoBtla8>
- m) Carlos said their November 9 Zoom meeting will feature the APS food director, who will speak about their adaptation to lunches during the fall semester.
- n) Christina noted that COVID will create hardship. The Navajo Nation released their hardship CARES Act, which will be open to any Navajo member on and off Tribal land. The application will be open November 3-30. Applicants will be asked to identify how COVID has impacted their lives. Christina added that land grants are not being transparent about their awards regarding farmers markets and how that will look. In addition, the CCSD (central consolidated school district) has prevented people from communicating their concerns. "It's a red flag. We're not paying attention to the price index of foods – food is very costly."
- o) Kyle said, "I organize with farmers and network with farmers markets and other individuals in the community. Food sovereignty is my concern."
- p) Andrew invited those on the call to shoot him an email in the chat if you'd like to communicate with him. He noted that people are worried about immigration status and the type of benefits they can receive because of that. They are also worried about what kind of information is collected during COVID. People are saying there are resources available, but the resources are not being well communicated. Andrew's email is andrew@healthactionnm.org.
- q) Victoria said, "Things were always bad, and they've gotten worse." She added that some people have said they haven't seen much of a change because food access, access to land to grow their own food has always been hard. Some farmers have expanded into other foods that are preservable and shelf-stable, such as beans. USDA was making online SNAP available via giant producers such as Walmart. She added that [Novo Dia](#) was trying to get added, which would allow La Semilla to participate. The system has always been unstable. Minimum wage is a holdover from the Jim Crow era.

- r) Anna said there would be workshops online for drying vegetables, water hauling, and other subjects. She is trying to focus on providing more support. It's been difficult but she said she was persevering. There was a delivery of food boxes the previous Friday. The day of this meeting was last day on delivery of core hygiene buckets. Their report with a map and summary will be coming out soon. Anna added that 6,000 houses receive SNAP services in McKinley County. They are making sure the most vulnerable are working with community health reps and senior citizens' centers. She went on to say that they have built a great working relationship with many partners, such as in Ramah. NM Social Justice Equity Institute received a grant in conjunction with Roanhorse Consulting from Con Alma for a gap analysis. The gap analysis will include people's stories about their lived experience through COVID. Food, water, housing and energy is always a big problem for those households. Anna added that they are working with Dig Deep to go beyond food delivery to water access. They were able to get water security access with Dig Deep for the county and will purchase a water storage container. Anna said her daughter Krystal also working in this area. "Americans must understand the history of the country, to understand the genocide." Lilly posted a link in the Zoom chat to [a recent article in USA Today](#), should folks want to learn more.
- s) Tyler said he loved the hope that comes with listening to each other. He lives in northern Taos County. He said that area schools were cutting back the number of lunches they are providing because families didn't pick them up. This set off a chain reaction in which the organization that buys from farmers and prepares food for schools is having budget issues and can't purchase as much from producers, harming producers. Tyler added that creative solutions were being developed but they were not there yet. There was a challenge getting food to families in very rural settings and developing other markets for producers, especially during the winter.
- t) Katy said she would echo much of what Sherry said. There are upticks in people coming to get food. They are experiencing lags in terms of getting food to the warehouse. Food costs were higher in the past few weeks. Regarding the USDA commodities poundage, there will be a significant decrease next year. This year, the food bank network across the state received 28 million pounds of food through CFAP and TFAP. Next year they expect to receive 4.1 million pounds.
- u) Zak said that NMDA was still working to assist local farms and ranchers during COVID by connecting them with resources.
- v) Karen echoed what Bruce had said: They were trying, in every county, and as quickly as possible, to reach out and respond to county needs. At the state level, they were coordinating resources to be both more active and proactive.
- w) Roy said more food was still needed in Las Vegas and San Miguel County. There is high unemployment as well. He predicted the situation would worsen over the winter, and added that anything that could be done to assist people would be really important. Roy encouraged those on the call: "Keep doing the great work you are doing – there is a lot of work to be done."
- x) Dr. Montoya noted that this was her first time participating in the general action team, although she regularly attends the Funding/Philanthropy Action Team meetings. The Chamiza Foundation's mission is to support pueblo communities' perpetuation of culture and traditions. During COVID they were assisting people in many ways. Their board decided to accept applications for emergency relief in addition to their



regular program. They will be doing their regular granting in 2021, in two rounds, ranging from \$2,000 – \$12,000. Agriculture was included in their funding priorities. Dr. Montoya said that there were very exciting agricultural projects going on. She hoped the momentum continues and was looking forward to getting applications in that area. She added that regarding the rising COVID cases, Pueblos were becoming stricter with people who are leaving and returning. She said the Pueblo of Acoma had created a food pantry in preparation for possible future needs to keep people safe, especially elders.

- y) Rep. Stansbury said she had been listening to what everyone is doing in their communities and was grateful for the work. She mentioned the recent op ed in the [Albuquerque Journal](#), [Santa Fe New Mexican](#), and [Las Cruces Sun News](#) and extended her gratitude to everyone who contributed and helped edit the piece. There was a 750 word limit for the op-ed. She asked that people share it widely. Rep. Stansbury has been getting requests to follow up about the state budget, including the Double Up Food Bucks program.
- a. **Budget Cycle.** Rep. Stansbury anticipated normal budget cycle process would follow the usual process, with a leadup to the session in mid -January. The LFC committee reviews agency budget proposals and votes on overall framework. Then, House Appropriations reviews and approves and sends to Senate the week before the session.
 - i. The most important is to get baked into the LFC schedule as the state is currently in crisis. Rep. Stansbury said she was in conversation with DFA and LFC regarding considering a one-time emergency request, in which the LFC would administer funds to food banks and potentially other programs on a one-time basis. She cautioned that it won't be on a scale for what is needed, as it isn't in the framework. "We should still advocate for more and continue to get information into the public sphere."
 - b. **Rep. Stansbury encouraged everyone to keep pumping information out there, especially in the press.** "The more there is understanding about the food crisis, the more the political will should increase."
 - c. Rep. Stansbury had to suspend work on the coalition's bill as she was focusing on her day job and the election. She asked that coalition members keep the ideas coming and keep refining them [in the outline](#) and promised to pick it back up after the election.
 - d. Rep. Stansbury is leading a water group focusing on water issues in the state, including drought, water management, code and more, composed of members working across the sector, similar to this one. Please contact her if you would like to join at melaniestansbury@yahoo.com.
 - e. The election is in 2 weeks. Rep. Stansbury noted that significant portions of the state had very low voter turnout, especially the Navajo Nation and along the southern border of the state. She predicted that some races would be lost simply due to low voter turnout. "There is a huge need to get information out into communities, because there is limited capacity to digital and radio due to the rurality of people's situations. People can vote, and can vote on the weekend in these areas. There is a great need for help to get out the vote." Feel free to email her for any more information at melaniestansbury@yahoo.com. **"If you live in an area where you have a food and ag champion, help them get re-elected. That's how we get legislation enacted."**



- i. Lilly added that people can support elections by working on the polls, election protection, etc. She added, “If your organization doesn’t currently have a policy, please consider supporting people meaningfully engaging in democracy.”
 - ii. Tiffany asked Rep. Stansbury what the session will look like. Rep. Stansbury said there was no definitive answer and that she thought it would look like the special session in June. She wasn’t sure if the building would be open. “If it’s appropriate for your org to be there, just be sure that your reservations can be canceled.” Tiffany wondered about the the best way to assist during the probable virtual proceedings. Rep. Stansbury said people could text her anytime during the session. She wasn’t sure about the other legislators, but thought phone and text would be the best way to contact them as well as they are inundated with email.
- f. Lilly noted that while normally, prefile happened from the middle of December to the middle of January, that the prefile period had been reduced: January 4 – January 15. The session opens on January 19.

II Review and clarify priorities:

Lilly reminded the group that not all of the priorities required legislative solutions. Rep Stansbury asked people to keep refining ideas in the [online Google doc](#) (the bill outline), and she would reprise working on it in 2 weeks. In the meantime, **if coalition members could help identify which oversight body the priorities fall into (e.g., federal, state, legislative, administrative and community)**, that would be very helpful in guiding the work going forward.

III Updates from Action Teams

Funding/Philanthropy Action Team

- Valerie noted that there may be an event in February in which the New Mexico Foundation was planning to be involved. Also, the Vecino Fund was now open as an [online application](#). She added that the NM Law Center had announced her hire. She will be doing community outreach in environmental justice and hoped to chime in from that angle in the food, hunger, water, ag policy workgroup. There is an [environmental justice virtual speaker series](#) that all are welcome to explore.
- Lilly gave a shoutout to Rep Stansbury for leveraging national resources foundational to the Native American Relief Fund. Rep. Stansbury said that NM Foundation has raised \$1.66 million from donations nationwide.
- Valerie recalled that FEMA had denied Jicarilla water trucks. She reminded the group if there should be snafu in availability of sources to access water, she advised turning to philanthropy because they are willing to help.
- Lilly gave a shout out to Thornburg Foundation, which made it possible to help the state leverage \$1 million.
- Lilly noted that it is not just a matter of getting resources out, it’s the matter of reimagining systems. Rep. Stansbury added that there are many people in NM and afar who have been working for decades to create a Native-led and Native-driven philanthropic model. During COVID one of the biggest challenges was to not reproduce inequality – Rep. Stansbury stated she was proud of the difficult and courageous conversations that took place. “The work continues.”

Communication Action Team

- Work has been ongoing at the cross-initiative level, as well as individual efforts to raise awareness around these issues. Lilly reminded the group that anyone who has good communication tools to share, NM First has been adding to the website. We've been communicating directly with media and legislators as well as action alerts. She encouraged those looking for additional support around telling their story to join the communication action team and do problem solving there, or reach out to Sharon at NM First at sharon@nmfirst.org.

Policy and Advocacy Action Team

- The smaller policy and advocacy group has been focusing on aligning the policy workgroup's pandemic priorities document with Rep. Stansbury's [bill outline](#), as well as furnish extra details, resources, etc. that might help inform the bill.

Food Systems Action Team

- This group has now combined with the Value Chain Action Team in NM First's Ag Resilience program in response to requests from participants from both groups that the efforts be combined. Erika said she would send out reminders. The group will hold its next meeting on Nov. 12 at 3:30 pm. Kendal Chavez of PED will be giving a short presentation on the Farm-to-School programs. For more information or if you would like to receive updates from Erika, please contact her at erika@nmfirst.org.

IV Survey & interviews

- Please take [the survey](#) to let NM First know your lessons learned in the food and hunger relief efforts during the pandemic. Also, the survey has a section where you can let them if you'd like to meet for a deeper conversation. Or contact Sharon Berman at sharon@nmfirst.org.

The next meeting of the General Action Team will be November 5 at 12:00 pm.

Topic: Food, Hunger, Water, Ag Policy - General Team Meeting

Date: 11.5.20, 12:00 – 1:30 pm (Every other Thursday)

Join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89701113333>

Dial: 1-346-248-7799 Meeting ID: 897 0111 3333

