

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Workgroup

General Action Team

11.5.20 ♦ 12-1:30 pm

Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Katie Anderson, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Jane Braithwaite, Office of Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Molly Callaghan, Office of Congresswoman Deb Haaland
- Lacey Daniell-Miller, Save the Children
- Tyler Eschelman, NM Coalition to
- Kathlyne Gish, NMHU
- Bruce Hinrichs, NMSU Extension
- Sherry Hooper, Food Depot
- Heather Hoffman, Barrett House
- Kyle Jim, Diné Introspective
- Patty Keane, Registered Dietician
- Derek Lin, NM Voices for Children
- Annmarie McLaughlin, Santa Fe Community Foundation
- Denise Miller, New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association
- Roy Montibon, The Montibon Company
- Christina Morris, DOH
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, Covenant Pathways, NM Thrives
- Jason New, NMDA
- Victoria Quevedo, La Semilla Food Center
- Karen Plawecki, NMSU
- Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-New Mexico
- Erika Robers, NM First
- Stephanie Rogus, NMSU
- Emily Wildau, NM Voices for Children

Lilly mentioned that both Representatives Ferrary and Stansbury had been re-elected. Rep. Stansbury planned to attend the next meeting

I. **Check In.** Name, location, how you are feeling about the state of the world.

- People called in from Albuquerque, Anthony, Corrales, Farmington, Las Vegas, Las Cruces, Peralta, Santa Fe, Shiprock and Taos County.
- People shared how they were feeling. Responses included:
 - Dysregulated
 - A lot of uncertainty and a little bit of hope.
 - Stressed.
 - Uncertainty and hope. Working to avoid the anxiety. Not ready to take head out of sand yet.
 - Las Cruces. Feeling anxious right now and hopeful
 - Extremely anxious about elections and about the fact that the COVID-19 numbers continue to rise. Look forward to hearing from the Governor today.
 - Happy to be getting a haircut today. Feeling anxious, lots of mixed emotions.
 - Anxious and a little bit of hope.
 - Emotions are on roller coaster depending on when I listen to the news.
 - Feeling refocused.
 - Feeling impatience and is wondering which anxiety to dial into.
 - Lucky to be able to do the things we do. Another day in paradise!

- In limbo space, not sure how to feel. Waiting.
- Feeling cautiously optimistic and hopeful that we can have healthy conversations, heal harms. Getting a lot of that with annual conference – healthy land and issues people care about.
- Restless. Keep checking the news on Twitter more often than is probably healthy.
- Glad to be joining and circling back with you all today.
- On a rollercoaster between anxious and hopeful with a little bit of nausea.
- We planned to hit the ground running whatever the election outcome. All of our work needs to continue and ramp up no matter what the outcome.
- Anxious and worn out. Channeling anxiety into work we need to do.
- Feeling hopeful at silver lining that boss and friend/colleague won their races. Anxious and trying to remain optimistic and focused.
- Not confident that we'll be able to bridge the very deep gaps in our society. We are living in the disunited states of hysteria. The work we are doing here is a very good example of how people with divergent backgrounds can work together effectively. To me this group is a leading light to solving problems. A lot of our issues are based on systems we have both in NM and in across the states. Looking forward to seeing how all of this will unfold. Not that hopeful, but ready to do the work.
- Feeling tired. To combat some fatigue, I'm trying to keep in focus the long road.
- Dazed and confused. Optimistic but a little anxious. Looking forward to tomorrow and what it will bring.
- Vacillating between dread and hope, trying to find some middle ground. How to better serve and work together in our state, let the dread and the roller coaster go in the back seat.
- Anxious and excited. A lot of change and opportunity happening. A million incredible people elected to positions that have never happened before. Focusing on that and hopeful that we can come together and make positive changes happen in NM regardless of the national situation.
- Stephanie shared that her brief would soon be ready to review. She said she would share link when it is ready. Some findings included 30 percent food insecurity and 15 percent very low security.

Lilly noted that the policy workgroup had 400+ members. We may not share political views, but we are coming together with common beliefs. Paying attention to people who distribute emergency food is important; advocates for food security, researchers, food producers, families and children are all important. We have been driving hard to work together, thinking deeply about hunger and food production in NM. There are a lot of lessons, and we are connecting dots in ways we might not have done before.

II. Policy Priorities and Providing Detail for the Bill Draft

- a. Lilly noted that “water relief” would be removed from the title in the food bill. Rep. Stansbury and others are working on a separate bill having to do with water.
- b. Sherry said they were having conversations with legislators about food and hunger and the rising pandemic numbers. The legislators were understanding and demonstrated willingness to help. There is also hesitancy to commit as legislators are unsure what the budget is going to look like.
 - i. Food banks are doing their best to access CARES Act funds. The Food Depot is working with The City of Santa Fe to access additional CARES Act funds to purchase more food. With the increase in demand for emergency assistance, they cannot rely totally on donated food. CARES Act Fund runs out and the dollars need to be spent by end of December
 - ii. Funding for 2021 is uncertain.



- iii. There is a proposed massive cut to the TFAP program (emergency assistance). Roughly, there will be a drop from 26 million pounds of food to 7 million pounds. It is predicted that the economy will take at least 4 years to rebound. They are starting to plan for at least 12 months for food and hunger relief programs throughout the state.
- iv. The Farmers to Families Food Boxes phase 4 has been funded. Shamrock Foods received the contract again. They are expecting the first delivery of food boxes on Nov. 12 or sooner. The food boxes are around 30 pounds and will contain dairy, produce, and meat. They'll add other foods that have been donated. This phase will run through December.
- c. Katy said that the last conversation re. TFAP – about 4.1 million pounds of food – has been confirmed for Quarter 1 in 2021. They were estimating approximately 9 million pounds total for the year, down from 25-26 million pounds this year. “These are numbers that we haven’t seen for the state since 2013.”
 - i. Sherry added that the decrease was due to the TFAP foods, due to trade mitigation, had created a situation in which surplus food was being purchased and disseminated by the government. “I think there’s not a lot of surplus right now.” There are a bunch of news stories that grocery stores are preparing for people to shop and buy up a lot of food. TFAP program will produce very low poundage for NM.
 - ii. Patty asked about the advocacy strategy. “And how can we help.”
 - iii. Katy replied that letting folks know has been important. A recent conversation with Sen. Heinrich, they discovered he had not been aware of the situation. Sherry added, “We’re doing our best to keep congressional delegation informed. We’re trying to set up meetings with them now that the elections have been decided.” They are also keeping legislators informed.
 - 1. Lilly recalled that there had been a request for \$11 million in the 2020 special session. She said there was a current effort for the food banks: a one-time, \$5 million request. Sherry says that DFA understands the request and seem supportive and are working on ways to make it happen. She reiterated that while legislators are understanding, they are entering a session where covering their own bills for the state may be uncertain. She added that the food banks are still looking into raising private funds.
 - 2. Sherry added that they are working on capacity building for partner agencies, such as for cold storage. They are researching pods with refrigeration units, which would increase the capacity of partner agencies to do more. Food banks and pantries are setting up drive-through pantries, a setting which protects both distributors and recipients. They are trying to anticipate what kinds of needs their partners might have over the winter. For instance, if it is a bad winter – so they are looking into tents. Partner agencies in Northern NM are having difficulty finding volunteers. Volunteers are often older people with spare time, and as before they are choosing to stay home due to the public health situation. “We’re trying to work with different communities to provide volunteers.” There was concern that the volunteer shortage would affect agencies’ ability to stay open.
 - 3. Lilly summed up: at the federal level, the goal is to work with and keep federal delegation informed, and on the state level, to help them understand the gaps, unmet need, and on community level – donations and volunteering.

4. Patty said, specific to TFAP. Getting grassroots advocacy going to the delegation so it's not always the food banks' responsibility. She wondered if the Rep-elect will be interested in acting on the House Ag Committee.
 5. Carlos noted he had communicated with Brandon Hall, a staffer with Yvette Herrell staffer and had a sense that she was very supportive of pandemic relief and in maintaining funding for SNAP. Carlos added in the chat that Mr. Hall may be a policy director with the representative-elect: brandon@yvetteherrell.com. He also shared information on the Interfaith Hunger Coalition's Zoom presentation on Monday, Nov. 9, 6:30 p.m., featuring Sandra Kemp from APS Food and Nutrition.
 6. Katy added that Feeding America is very aware of TFAP and U.S. Commodity. "The drop in pounds is affecting every state in the union." She underlined the need to keep it at the forefront for our delegation and added that there is very good work being done.
 7. Bruce responded regarding the lack of volunteers. He suggested reaching out to the master gardeners, touch base with John Garlisch in ABQ. **Bruce offered to help Sherry with contacts.**
 8. Denise asked about raising funds for cold storage for their partners. Shery said they are looking to help partners in Taos. **Denise said she'd follow up with Sherry offline.**
- d. Denise said that the word from David Abbey at LFC was that he was skeptical; he had said that there were a lot of requests and a lot of need from all the food programs.
- i. She added that there had been a change in deadline for the federal grant related Double Up Food Bucks. This will have an effect on the effort to raise more funds for the federal grant. The deadline has been moved to December, when it used to take place in May. They are now going to continue both making requests through the legislature as well as pursuing philanthropic organizations. She is continuing to work both strategies.
 1. Denise added that if the funds come from the state, they lose 5%, as it goes to NMSU as pass-through. Over four years, they will need \$2 million of state money (\$500,000 per year). If the funds come from philanthropy, they would need much less - around \$1.5 million. That would bring in \$7.5 million in federal funds, will stimulate \$17.9 million in the state economy. Farmers will see about \$8.4 million in sales over the next 4 years.
 - ii. Denise noted that on November 10, Krysten Aguilar from La Semilla and the NM Food and Ag Policy Council would make a presentation for the Economic & Rural Development Committee. Victoria added that the public comment segment might not take place until the end of the day. La Semilla was working on the bill draft. They are also trying to line up their advocacy online, since the session will be virtual. They are looking into the kinds of civic engagement and virtual teach-ins they can conduct in January, knowing that not everyone has connectivity and access to online platforms.
- e. Victoria said that the Healthy Food financing Initiative was based on national legislation that goes through the Farm Bill. It has one pocket of money at USDA and another at the Treasury. La Semilla is writing the bill to access the Treasury fund, which would involve going through CDFI and the economic development program.
- i. Lilly asked how folks can be supportive of their work. Victoria replied that calling in and/or emailing the delegation to voice support for the programs would be helpful.
- f. Lilly noted that regarding food and hunger in higher education, Dr. Sarita Cargas of UNM had finished a [study on food insecurity](#) among higher education students. She added that Sherry and her team



were planning an event around student hunger. Sherry added that the event would feature the [Hungry to Learn](#) documentary. Dr. Cargas would be on the panel and discuss findings of her study. Sherry said she would share more info when it was available.

- g. Regarding Policy Priority 3 (“Address Root Causes of Food Insecurity”), Lilly noted that people were excited to think about food and water as a human right. “While it may not have legislative legs, it grounds us – food and water matter.”
 - i. Derek said he did not have updates about food tax issues and would check in with Bill. Sherry said they had spoken to Bill, who did not think a food tax bill would be reintroduced. She noted that John Arthur Smith had been a proponent of food taxation in the past - he would be leaving the legislature.
- h. Patty said they were looking forward to hearing the Interfaith Hunger Coalitions’ presentation. Stephanie noted in the chat that their presentation might be recorded. They would address what was happening locally, regionally, statewide and nationally. Patty added, “We need people who are willing to do the work, and to fund it.” They shared information about their presentation before the Economic and Rural Development Committee on Nov 10th.
- i. Kyle said he was thankful to be within this circle, strategizing for the benefit of the state. He said his community in Shiprock was aware of the food desert and the power plants. Diné Introspective has been in operation for 3 years. Kyle noted that there is a sense of urgency, whether food, extracting minerals for aluminum or others. He added that trade wars are a real issue. Kyle said he was very thankful to be living in the United States. “We need to find sustainable ways to live, sustain our networks, longevity, and sure everybody gets a fair cut, from paperwork to working in the soil. In the Four Corners Area they have the San Juan River and land. And so we do need to find sustainable ways of living and supporting ourselves through food security building these networks. And so we want to continue living in longevity. And so all of this does need to happen through policy and labors and making sure that everybody gets a fair cut, from the paperwork to working in the soil. And so I just want to share that with the region of the Four Corners area. Yes, we have the San Juan River, we have land available, but at the same time, we, we have the pandemic. We are living in a low income community where people do not have the opportunity to really force at farming and gardening and so much of this relies on heavy equipment and wages to be paid and so families are looking for new ways to support themselves. And why not food? And so through Diné Introspective, we have a program called Enchant the Environment where we are reactivating the farmlands, waking up people to transform them into farmers, food fighters - freedom Fighters all around.” Kyle shared his email and invited people to contact him at kylejim@dineintrospective.life.

III. Lilly acknowledged that everyone doing incredible work. She said, “A lot of systems change happens because of the world we build with each other. Thank you for showing up!”

- a. The next meeting of the General Action Team will take place November 19 at 12:00 pm.
 - Join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89701113333>
 - Dial: 1-346-248-7799 Meeting ID: 897 0111 3333
 - Info: sharon@nmfirst.org

