

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Workgroup
Communication Action Team
10.12.20 ♦ 3:30 – 4:30 pm
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Erika Robers, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Xavier Vallejo: NM First
- Sherry Hooper: Food Depot
- Tsiporah: NM Thrives

I. Updates

Lilly: How did Hunger Action Month go?

Sherry: Roadrunner did a lot more on it than Food Depot, who was overwhelmed by the pandemic.

Lilly: We got information out on it during September. High five to your communication teams. Through your advocacy team, we got an op ed in.

Sherry: Food Depot has a great robust advocacy committee. Scott Bunting has a long history of policy work at the DC level. He's on their board. Caroline Castner said she was retiring and she became part of their committee. She's been working on their legislative agenda.

They have been able to get two articles/op eds in the Santa Fe New Mexican. Whole list of ideas for more articles to do over the holidays and prior to the NM Legislative session.

Tsiporah: She shared information and tweeted things during the Hunger Action month.

Lilly: Sherry did you do open houses with Legislators?

Sherry: Two more to do- Friday the 23rd and this Saturday the 17th. They had 6 legislators show up for the first one. Senator Papen, Senator Ortiz y Pino, Rep Ferrary, Rep Zamora, Sen Rodriguez. Senator Tallman will be at one. Gave them a chance to run through a presentation to show how they have responded to the pandemic. They talked to them about how the pandemic may last quite a while- 3-4 years they will be needing to respond to food insecurity.

Lilly: They have powerful power points.

Sherry- there isn't a lot of awareness about how their network of food banks work together.

Lilly: I'm blown away by the lack of understanding at the state level of how food pantries work and feed people. I want people to understand that we are counting on a system that is underfunded.

Sherry: They believe that we are totally state funded. They are really shocked to see that only 16% of their funding comes from public monies. This was a chance to educate legislators.

Lilly: I was interested in Stansbury's op ed.

Sherry: I've never been part of such coordinated policy work. It's not easy to keep the momentum going on the policy work. Xavi you've got the technology down. It's impressive. Thank you!

Lilly: Is your worst fear bearing out in terms of COVID fatigue and contributions? How are you sustaining yourselves?

Sherry: We have not seen a decline in the financial contributions. I have board members who are sitting at home and they are making donor thank you calls. They are hearing that donors will continue to give. We'll see how the foundation support pans out- we have a tendency to see year-end donations come in from foundations. 2020 is driving me crazy! The latest challenge is the shortage in aluminum!

Farmers to Families food boxes. We're in the third week of the five-week program. Shamrock foods got a huge contract. All the food boxes are combined into one. The boxes, have dairy, sliced cheese, yogurt, protein is two bags of cooked meat, and produce potatoes, onions, apples and carrots. President Trump said that everyone had to put a letter in each box. That letter has created such an ordeal for them. A reporter wrote an article about it. We said we weren't going to remove the letter because it's too much work and volunteer power to do it. We decided not to remove letters but put a sticker on each box that explained that they are non-partisan and that the boxes are taxpayer-funded. One man wrote an op ed to the Santa Fe New Mexican complaining about them. People are directing their anger towards Food Depot.

Lilly: You walk an interesting line. You are trying to keep your non-partisan status. So many nonprofits have been punished when they have taken a position.

Tsiporah: You're doing such amazing work. You are appreciated and we are grateful for the work you do.

Lilly: Would you like to share what you are doing?

Tsiporah: I'm diving into the law and judicial cases. She's sent a request to Prof Brody at UNM Law School regarding the anti-donation clause. When was the IRS designation created- 1954? Our constitution is way out of sync. Can we change it through definitions? Or do we need to take a different approach?

Lilly: Thanks for the update.

Sherry: Reach out to Allen Oliver who knows more about it. Maybe it's worth a conversation.

Lilly: She did reach out to him. First, she was lectured by email. She can see the value of the anti- donation clause. We don't want it to be repealed. But there are always these extra work arounds. You can't even name the precedent because people are trying to fly under the radar.

Tsiporah: The oil and gas industry pays 12% taxes in NM.

Lilly: We've done tax breaks for businesses in NM for so long and they are often polluting our water and land and exploit our workers. The anti-donation clause has not helped those areas. Tsiporah and Lilly haven't had time to go back through, but there are many of the town halls that have brought up the anti-donation clause as a strategy. It's important to recognize that it's not a partisan issue. It's been a problem for a very long time. She's confident that they will find others who wish to work on this issue.

Sherry: Kitchen Angels- had to sign over their building to the city of Santa Fe. She's going to remind him to connect with Tsiporah.

Tsiporah: Cold storage which would help so many food banks are underutilized or closed.



Lilly: Some of the cold storage facilities are often facing rules that if it's run federally, they cannot be used by non-federal programs. What can folks do to lift up the work you are doing?

Sherry: Our advocacy recommendations can be shared. Sen Rodriguez wants to see the report and draft legislation around it. It's an opportunity to inform and education. There's a gleaning meeting tomorrow.

Lilly shared the gleaning recommendations that came out of their town hall meetings. She felt the listening sessions weren't well facilitated and many things are coming out at the last minute.

Sherry: School food waste work group wasn't engaged. She brought in people who have backgrounds in policy. They have contacts within state government. They have a lot of research and a report- interviews with food service folks around the state. Branching out to smaller school districts. Do recess before lunch and extend lunch to 30 minutes.

Some districts are claiming that there isn't any kitchen food waste.

Lilly: There is a protectiveness in this atmosphere for fear of being defunded.

Sherry: It's always an opportunity to educate about food waste.

Lilly: Maybe there will be an opportunity to share out the final report on food waste and gleaning with the other policy groups. Lift those that seem most viable and bring back to the whole group.

Sherry: Sen Ortiz y Pino called a meeting for them to report out their findings. We'll see what happens. At least it's a chance to talk about the problems of food waste and possible solutions. There's a lot of waste in other areas too. What bothers me the most is that the actual expiration date isn't real- it's about the food industry selling more food. Much of the food that they receive is just beyond sell by date. It's a federal issue.

Lilly : When you get the times you (Sherry) are on the agenda for the 12th, share with the rest of the committees. For public comment.

Sherry: We have had two quarters during the pandemic. Maybe we could announce how many people we have served. I'm concerned about the fact that people think we're in recovery- we are still in response mode. We need better messaging on that.

Lilly: The way she's been talking about it is that some of the state wasn't as hard hit as other parts of the state. The pivot onward feels similar to how things were before the pandemic. Other communities haven't had that opportunity and continue to feel the same emergency situation with the pandemic.

Tsiporah: Has anyone heard anything about the All Together New Mexico fund?

Sherry said she would call Lisa O'Brian at the Taos Community Foundation to find out what's going on.

Lilly: What are we learning about recovery and what are we learning about people still in the middle of pandemic emergency mode? Several funds are back in fundraising mode.

Tsiporah: If this isn't the time to dip into emergency funding, when is?

II. Next Steps: The next meeting of the Communications Action Team will be November 9, 3:30 pm.

