

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Workgroup
General Action Team
11.19.20 ♦ 12:00 – 1:30 pm
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Lorenzo Alba, Casa de Peregrinos
- Andrew Baker, Health Action NM
- Jane Braithewaite, Office of Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Molly Callaghan, Office of Congresswoman Haaland
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation
- Tim Davis, NM Center on Law and Poverty
- Rep. Joanne Ferrary
- Allison Griffin, Cullari Communications Global
- Kyle Jim, Diné Introspective
- Patty Keane, Licensed dietitian
- Senator-Elect Brenda McKenna, Field Rep for Congresswoman Deb Haaland
- Dr. Amanda Montoya, Chamiza Foundation
- Derek Lin, New Mexico Voices for Children
- Judy Messal, Interfaith Hunger Coalition and Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-New Mexico
- Denise Miller, NM Farmer's Marketing Association
- Tsiporah Nephesh, NM Thrives & Covenant Pathways
- Victoria Quevedo, La Semilla Food Center
- Emily, Arasim, NM Acequia Association
- Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-New Mexico
- Valerie Rangel, NM environmental law center
- Jenny Ramo, NM Appleseed
- Ben Rasmussen, National Center for Frontier Communities
- Erika Robers, NM First
- Pam Roy, Farm to Table NM and NM Food and Ag Policy Council
- Enrique Romero, New Mexico Acequia Association
- Helen Tso, UNM Health Sciences Center, NW Region
- Mike Venticinque, NM Farmers Marketing Association
- Emily Wildau, NM Voices for Children

1. Check in – name, where you are calling in from, and something you're grateful for

People called in from Anthony, Albuquerque, Corrales, Farmington, Las Cruces, Peralta, Santa Fe, Shiprock, and Taos Pueblo. People shared what they were grateful for next:

- Truly grateful for all of you
- Grateful for my staff who is working very hard, staying safe at home so they can continue to serve the community
- Grateful that family is in agreement regarding the safest way to behave over the holidays
- Grateful for mother, sisters and family. My aunt turned 102 this week. Grateful that she is with us and that I had and have such women and family in my life.
- Important work being done for a very uncertain legislative cycle. Grateful for people putting in the hours nonstop since and beyond the election. It's very moving and I'm grateful to be learning from so many amazing people.
- Safe interaction with family. Also grateful that my brother who was exposed to COVID has tested negative.
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- Grateful I have family close by right now and am able to get in some socially distanced family time and have some semblance of connectivity this time of year.
- Grateful for human resiliency. Many of us have already demonstrated it adapting to a global pandemic, and I know even more is going to be asked for us. Remember what we've all accomplished professionally and personally. In the coming days we may have to dig a little deeper.
- This is the first T-giving we haven't spent with kids and grandkids. Grateful for technology. I have 2 new grandkids who live out of state and I get to see them on Facetime. Grateful that we continue to continue doing the work with these groups.
- Thankful our kids are close by. We are still going to do the cooking and baking and take it by each of the kids. Be with each other by Zoom.
- My son-in-law with diabetes had a negative COVID test and that NM is in line for the vaccine
- Grateful for recent Bread for the World regional town hall.
- Grateful for my colleagues in the Denver area. We are trying very hard to keep that collegial spirit alive. We had a happy hour last night and it was fun to digitally let our hair down a bit and talk about our favorite movies. I am grateful for our bishop.
- Thankful for my job. I graduated in May.
- Super grateful to have a job that aligns with my values and to work with you all and address issues important to our state.
- So grateful for the love, peace and beauty people share. Being part of this collective group is very meaningful to me, every time I see your faces. To NM First for pulling this group together. Grateful for my brother and having him nearby.
- Grateful, especially thinking about professional life for the work that has continued on, and for all the things that are happening at community levels, where folks are pulling together, coming up with creative responses and solutions to some really difficult challenges and circumstances. Learning from what folks are doing on the ground and being part of some of those conversations.
- I've been thankful for the Great British Baking Show, excellent escape.
- Grateful to be healthy. Health affects everything.
- Grateful for having good food and being able to put food on my family's table. Farmers and farmworkers who worked hard to plant that food and make sure everyone's fed.
- Thankful for virtual platforms.
- Thankful for all you do for NM communities
- Grateful we have beautiful weather in NM. I run and horseback ride.
- Thankful for my children, my family, the support of everybody. Thankful for all the courageous people during this pandemic. There's a great energy here within this meeting. We can put our efforts together to benefit everybody.
- Family friends and faith as we carry one another through this time, whether we like it or not. Thank you for the great energy on this team.

2. COVID outbreak

- a. Lorenzo said that everybody started off knowing what the policies and restrictions were going to be on Monday. They were geared up, but they weren't ready for the two big box store closures in Las Cruces¹. They had to lease a 50 ft trailer to pick up a load from one of the Walmarts that was closed. Lorenzo presumed that happened in Albuquerque and Santa Fe as well. The Albertson's in Las Cruces had a game plan and moved food to two other locations. "If more of those stores closes we don't have the capacity to rent or lease storage space out here. It's a concern – it's holiday time. We can't return to any of the stores to do rescue or any kind of assistance until December 3." Lorenzo wondered what the Governor's office might do about it. "When I saw it in the newspaper last night I immediately called my staff and put them on alert. Not only are those stores big donors of our food but also monetarily. We need to nurture those relationships." Lorenzo added that he had a conversation this morning with some legislators. "I don't think anybody at the food banks were ready. They're having issues in Roswell too. We're trying to be here for each other."
 - i. Rep. Ferrary asked if Lorenzo knew the old Roadrunner Food Bank used to have an area with big freezer and refrigeration. He said the area is still there but it no longer has cold storage. He said a place called Valley Cold Storage exists and it is possible to lease space for them. "If another store closes in Las Cruces, that's another 2 trailers of food."
 - ii. Lilly noted that we had been anticipating this kind of situation. Even though we had the data to see this was coming, during the special session in June there was a funding request. There is now a smaller request for \$5 million in the November special session. "This has been a known issue. We were anticipating a spike of COVID-19 and for people to be losing employment benefits. It's not a tragic surprise, it's a predictable outcome." Lilly added that the next steps were very important. She asked members to hold food banks and others in the light. Two staff members had been infected.
 - iii. Rep Ferrary thought transportation and cold storage were included in the \$5 million.
 - iv. Lorenzo said, "the light is shining bright on us and we need to figure this out sooner or later." He noted that the store closures hadn't happened before and was concerned that two full weeks of closing them is would be detrimental to the food supply situation in the state.
 - v. Kurt wondered why stores couldn't hold the food in cold storage even though they are closed. Lorenzo replied that they are not designed to store food as they are retailers and their storage space is limited. Wal-Mart has gone to the same retail space design too. Wal-Mart has ability to store in trailers but the cost is astronomical.
 - vi. Patty said 2 weeks is an eternity for retail grocers. Lorenzo agreed and said, "We're talking 150-250 employees per store. It's going to be brutal."

¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/walmart-albertsons-texas-roadhouse-in-las-cruces-ordered-closed/ar-BB1b91kZ>

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- vii. Pam noted that at a meeting this morning Sherry had said that Wal-Mart and Smiths are closed in Sant Fe. Pam said that she is mentoring a grad student who is disabled, whose family uses SNAP and the function of home delivery. The only authorized delivery/curbside pickup for SNAP, were Wal-Mart and Smiths.² Pam suggested reaching out to state legislators and congressional leadership. She said that the food banks are in the process of doing that.
- viii. Lilly noted that were increased infected rates at Laguna Pueblo as well as other communities. She gave a shout out to Roadrunner for working with incident command to get food out there. “It’s really striking how many families are in quarantine and what the jump in numbers is from 2 weeks ago.”
- ix. Helen said she wanted to commend the Albuquerque Target stores. “Every single staff member had been trained to facilitate shoppers getting through the store as quickly as possible.” No matter where they were, they turned and asked if shoppers had found what they were looking for. She added that her impression was, with the schools reopening people felt they could go anywhere and everywhere. “I wonder as a group, what influence can this have on the stores to really step up their game for demanding and requiring masks and having sanitation and masks available?” People are sneezing and coughing in stores. Behavior change is very difficult for people. The message: the spread is real. What can we do on economical side, businesses to support, go the next mile and agree to enforce it in their stores? She added that there are two Wal-marts in Farmington, one of which serves CO, UT, AZ - and it closed. This put stress on the other store, which can encourage spread. Helen noted that people are traveling to other states to shop. “There’s a large movement of consumers that goes on. I can see that going on in Las Cruces, with people going to El Paso.”
1. Lilly noted that Helen was pointing to an area of the state where there is food apartheid. “You raise an interesting question regarding corporate responsibility. Is it the responsibility of corporate staff, who are only paid slightly above minimum wage?”
 2. Mike said there is continued support of CSAs, who accept SNAP cards. Some do deliveries, all are doing drop-offs. He encouraged people to continue to support them and reach out to them. They are growing every day and continuing to feed more and more folks. Help them with cold storage, cold trucks, expand the delivery process. Strengthen our local system to provide statewide food hubs with more assistance.
 3. Bryan added that Thornburg had had many conversations with other funders and nonprofits working in the local food chain and infrastructure space. They are trying to pool funds that would go toward the NMFMA COVID Local Food Chain Response Fund. It would address infrastructure needs at producer and/or community levels. He added that it was currently a work in progress. They are hoping to get some funding to support some of those funds early next year.

² <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/online-purchasing-pilot>

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- a. Denise added that they are grateful that the philanthropy community has had their eye on the infrastructure piece. In April-October, when they distributed funds, it was for urgent needs, such as PPE, electric bills, getting food to low-income communities. Now, looking at the next phase of need to make sure producers are economically resilient and can support local communities – it's a matter of infrastructure. She said she was hoping to get funds out in the first quarter of next year, in a participatory grant making process that will be equitable and inclusive. Participatory regarding decision making re. what should be funded where.
 - b. Bryan added that infrastructure needs are immense for producers and aggregators on the local food supply chain. The idea behind this fund is not meant as a panacea, but a way to get funding out to start meeting a little bit of the need. There's an understanding that there is a lot of need out there, and the desire is to contribute to getting funds flowing in that space.
4. Pam wondered if anyone could help identify or put together a list of infrastructures in the state with storage or cooking facilities that are underutilized. If we can provide a certain amount of investment into those facilities, it could help the coordination of the food/infrastructure system. Wondering if anyone is interested in that idea.
 - a. Someone mentioned the De Onate center with kitchen facility.
 - b. Lorenzo said he is working on a project that is getting funded by legislature and private donors. They are buying land for a storage facility with both a storage space and community base. They will be adding a commercial kitchen incubator with a cleanroom. It will provide economic development solutions for the community that will allow people to be more entrepreneurial and get more jobs out there. Lorenzo added that the property sits on 2 acres. Part of it will be food pantry and storage. "We are having conversations as an organization and within the community."
 - i. Lorenzo said they had a migrant crisis last year and didn't have enough commercial kitchen space to feed the people. It could be a working kitchen and a teaching kitchen. It could be used in emergencies. "We need to be more intentional in the state about adding infrastructure." Even at the legislative level to look at projects and think outside the box. Not just for our mission but for our communities.
 - c. Immediate or long-term responses in terms of COVID?
 - i. Rep. Ferrary said that what Lorenzo mentioned will be valuable for the Las Cruces community. She asked for more clarity from Pam.
 1. Pam replied that many municipalities have empty facilities and buildings that are not being utilized. Some of them are



community centers. Some are in rural centers. “We haven’t collectively mapped those out. What does the asset look like, what does it have/not have? What might it take to ramp up the facilities?” She said she had spoken to a community with a closed facility. Their challenge was that it would take \$8,000 to replace the boiler. The refrigeration works. “It would be an amazing investment. Seeing these things as long term solutions is an aspect as well.”

2. Rep. Ferrary wondered if the emergency response groups know if there is a process in place with the legislature wherein research could be performed to learn where the facilities might be, where are assets, needs, have it ready by July or August. She will check with their local center.
 - a. Lilly wondered about emergency response at the county level. She wondered whether any mapping happened at statewide level as part of statewide pandemic response. She added that the county-level made sense but was wondering about the statewide level. **Rep. Ferrary replied that she would start with the local and ask.**
 - d. Valerie asked the group to not forget those who do not have infrastructure, such as running water. She mentioned McKinley and San Juan counties. Those residents are being compromised and there are a lot of other factors at play. She added that other organizations need assistance providing money and equipment to help them get food, coal and firewood to elders. She asked that people please continue to reach out to those organizations and support whatever they are doing, even if it is for coal.
 - e. Kurt wanted to know more about the \$5 million. He wondered information could be shared for members to advocate. He wondered what to tell the hundreds of people on his list who to contact and where to apply pressure. Lilly replied that Rep. Stansbury said to reach out to those legislators who sit on the [Legislative Finance Committee](#).
 - f. Regarding advocacy efforts Lilly noted that in difficult times we show up week after week, month after month. “There’s an understanding among us that there is not one solution.” If we want to address hunger and find more solutions where there is already an urgent need in NM (such as hunger and agriculture), we need a multi-pronged response. Not only is money needed for food banks, but we also need money for SNAP Double Up Food Bucks so we can leverage federal dollars. We need to incentivize local ag. The baseline is food, water and income insecurity. Those are conversations we will continue to have with one another.

3. Updates

a. draft legislation

1. Jane said that Rep. Stansbury would get into the drafting part of the bill now. There were no assurances as to how this is going to come out. Jane said that Rep. Stansbury appreciates the flexibility to trust her and others working on it and noted that there will be give and take due to lack of funds. She finished by saying the group has done tremendous job getting input.
2. Pam gave several updates on NM Grown and Healthy Food Financing. They have put forth a letter outlining the NM Food and Ag Policy Council policy priorities. They will add more to that over next few months. Regarding NM Grown, the interagency work is moving forward beautifully to assure that agencies can create a permanent framework for working together so institutions can participate in a NM Grown type program. Rep. Dow was still working on NM Grown for early childhood, which will be for \$100,000. Rep. Dow may ask for it to be endorsed on December 18. Endorsements not required but it's a good way to give legislatures the opportunity to engage in leadership around an issue. Sen Stefanics and Gail Armstrong are requesting it to go up to \$250,000.
3. Denise gave an update on Snap Double Up Food Bucks, which matches participants with 50% off their produce when they purchase locally grown food. It's food security and an economic benefit to local producers. The program has been in effect for 10 years. Over the last 4 years we've had a 2.1 million federal grant. The grant will be running out in 2021 so we have to reapply for next round of fed funding. The fed fund has to be matched by an equal amount. We currently receive \$350,000 from the state, which has been essential to program. The program is poised for extensive growth. Denise said that this year they ran through state money in October, which never happens that quickly. Unfortunately it's a testament to the need by folks in the state. They added 18 grocery stores for a total of 29 grocery stores across the state that participate. It was a \$2.1 million/4 year, and they are asking for \$3.3 million federal grant. "We hope to get additional state funding." They are working hard with the Governor's office, who asked that they lean on the philanthropic community. They are tapped out with COVID too, so they are looking for \$500,000 per year recurring. Denise emphasized, "That money is leveraged in so many ways. It leverages \$7.5 million in federal funding over the next 4 years. It's a good investment by the state." She predicted that this year will be tight. The question is, what strategy will be successful? She noted that Rep. Stansbury was working on a fund for the emergency food system which could include SNAP. They were hoping to get this on the Governor's call for the special session. That would be ideal, as it directly addresses hunger.
4. Victoria addressed Healthy Food Financing. La Semilla is drafting the bill. They hit roadblocks with drafter, who finds language too aspirational, which is frustrating as such language should be aspirational. She added that equitable food-oriented development is an actual program that other states are using. It would leverage federal money, and

would fund emergency needs, while also looking ahead so we don't end up in a bad place in the future. It would support food hubs, full access for communities to have kitchens and storage spaces. Victoria said, "We accept Double Up Food Bucks at La Semilla. It's such a powerful program." She said they are advocating for all these programs at once. Getting food out to families who are living in poverty. They were able to speak with Udall staffers, confirming there will not be decreases to SNAP funding; and while that's in place, there was no news about whether there would be increases. Regarding buying food online, Victoria said that Novo Día, who supplies software to SNAP, has applied for a waiver from USDA to also be authorized through USDA. That would bring a huge influx for smaller scale producers, grocers and independent growers.

b. interim committee updates

- i. Lilly noted that coalitions would make a presentation on December 18 to the Legislative Education Study Committee. Lilly encouraged workgroup members to participate in public comment, cheer on their fellow members as they present. NM First will send out reminder as the information becomes available.
- c. Brenda shared a link to a recording of a virtual grants workshop that Congresswoman Deb Haaland co-hosted the day before. <https://haaland.house.gov/media/press-releases/video-haaland-hosts-virtual-grants-funding-workshop-local-non-profits>

4. Next Steps

5. Wrap up

Please contact Sharon Berman at sharon@nmfirst.org if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.