



Communications Action Team - Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy 7.13.20 • 3:30 – 4:30

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, Xavier Vallejo New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Jane Braithwaite, Office of Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Tsiporah Nephesh, NM Thrives
- Xavi Vallejo, NM First
- Sonya Warwick, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Wendy Wintermute, NM First

1. Introduction

2. Updates

- Sonya: We collected paper plate stories at a mobile distribution and captured a few comments about people's experiences. We asked, why they were in the food line and how it would impact their families. We didn't have people sign their first names, because we didn't get privacy releases. We'll be doing them at smaller distributions. The Seed Corps Response Team goes to ABQ quadrants and provides service for about 50 families, at summer feeding sites, where kids can get free summer lunch.
- Tsiporah: This is nonprofit week of action on the Hill. It's being conducted remotely. There are 4 hearings – on above-the-line charitable deductions. They are looking to an amount equal to one-third of the basic exemption.
 - There was an Unemployment Insurance Bill that passed - not sure if it was signed - that prevents nonprofits from having to pay up front and experiencing catastrophic cash loss.
 - There's also a loan program for mid-to-large nonprofits, and economic funding and emergency support for nonprofits.

3. Special General Action Team Meeting Announcement

- Lilly: We've been talking more policy stuff. We want you to participate in the discussion on Thursday with Rep. Stansbury to discuss what an agricultural bill would look like. Rep. Stansbury asked that the general action team members plan to meet. The meeting will be 2 hours (12-2 pm) to think about creative ways to take existing resources and infrastructure and reengineer those resources to better meet our needs. If you want to focus on local food systems, there's that option as well.
- Lilly: We're not asking folks to start over from scratch. We hope that in breakouts, people don't all decide to hang out with their colleagues. This is an effort to continue and build upon the cross-sector thinking the group has done so well. This will be with an intent to strategically get our priorities in order so that we can be ready for the interim committees and the regular session. What Rep. Stansbury reminded us was that time is of the essence. If we can get something done sooner, we can get our proposed pieces of legislation to be



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

looked over and deliberated by interim committees early on. All of you are welcome to come on Thursday and feel free to invite those who should be at the table. It's never too late to be a part of the conversation.

4. Updates

- Sonya: Feeding America puts out an annual report called: *Map The Meal Gap*. They released the report about a month ago and discussed the connections between the pandemic, unemployment, and hunger. They did it for children – it's compiled by county and includes all 33 counties. I will share the report with the other food banks and the group. Feel free to share it with your networks.
- Sonya: Congress will be looking at another package for Coronavirus Relief. Senate is on vacation but will return on July 17. There may be increases for programs such as SNAP and similar programs. There is also an effort in the Defense Authorization Act, to include provisions for a monthly allowance for military members who are at or below the 130% poverty level. Currently, about 40,000 people fall into that category nationwide. The House included it in their bill, but the Senate did not.
 - Lilly: I would be interested to see how that impacts NM. I'm also interested in national security view on the issue.
- Sonya: RRFB will be encouraging people to participate in the Census and register to vote.
- Wendy: The Household Pulse Survey Data from before COVID that's conducted weekly, they have all kinds of detailed breakdowns sorted by state. I'd like to get feedback regarding interpreting the data from a statistician.
 - Lilly: Maybe we can speak to Tom Charmer.
 - Wendy: I can also contact Lois at DOH.

5. Outreach for Hunger in NM

- Lilly: At the beginning of the pandemic, the Speaker's Office had created a graphic, and the collective had sent out information to legislators regarding resources around emergency and urgent supports for food. I wonder if anyone has thoughts on these three fronts:
 - Do we need to change the message?
 - What's the timing? Do we want to get something out this month?
 - Is there anyone besides legislators to connect to?
- Sherry: We have some agencies that have people coming through. There's been a lack of attendance. In drive throughs at the mall, there was a decrease in number of people coming through. Maybe tying this to a month that's associated with hunger. We should encourage legislators to educate their communities on hunger action month. I'm unsure if the numbers would stay stable or rise in the future. There could be a dramatic change.
 - Sherry: There are already companies that are having to lay people off again or put them on furlough.
 - Lilly: PPP was extended.
 - Sherry: I wonder if there is a schedule of when state and federal programs will run out. I think that information could prove useful to legislators.
 - Lilly: I will circle back with Patty and Mariana at the Governor's office, and Xavi will look online to see if that info exists.



- Jane: I will poll legislators.
 - Sonya: We've been getting calls from families asking about the P-EBT benefits. Has HSD addressed this?
 - Lilly: I can ask about that when reaching out.
 - Wendy: I can also ask Tim Davis at the NM Center for Law and Poverty
 - Lilly: As a result of our ongoing work and hyper focus on food and water insecurity, NM First has incorporated some of the thinking of this group into the biennial town hall. One of the tracks will be on food insecurity and local food systems. There will be someone from the Navajo Nation on the panel, and if there is anyone from the food banks who might also be interested in being on the panel, let me know because that would complete the panel.
6. Recap Meeting Frequency
- Lilly: I wonder if the group should meet once a month as it has, or would it make more sense to fold into the larger group?
 - Sonya: My main preference is that the food banks be represented and I'm not sure if these matters are discussed during the general group.
 - Lilly: The Communication Action team meetings do get more into nitty gritty than the general meetings.
 - Sonya: I think that the level of detail might be helpful and will better inform the work of the general group.
 - Tsiporah: I think meeting as a small group is a value-add, and once a month is doable.
 - Wendy: I like the smaller group meetings.
 - Jane: I see the positive in the smaller meetings.
7. NM Farm to Food Box Brainstorm Session
- Lilly: The USDA put out a grant opportunity with quick turnaround for producers in NM to participate in the Farm to Food Box program. Most NM producers don't meet Federal GAP requirements. That meant that NM doesn't have the bureaucratic infrastructure in place for people to take advantage of that opportunity. There were out of state producers who brought food in, but the ideal situation would be for the work to be done in-state. I spoke with Paula Garcia from the NM Acequia Association and Denis Miller from the NM Farmers Marketing Association and started a conversation with them, wondering what if NM had its own Farm to Food Box program. While there are programs in place, there's nothing at the scale needed to infuse resources into the industry. This is a policy need and policy opportunity agreed to in concept and that folks agreed to in the policy priorities. It will require brainstorming on the following topics:
 - Who are the deal makers and deal breakers around an NM Farm to Food Box Program?
 - Who else needs to be at the table?
 - Lilly: This will be frame for much broader conversation on policy.
 - Sonya: A lot of it comes down to packaging. It could be useful to think about pandemic vs. non-pandemic. If the world ever goes back to normal, could it be more cost-effective to do it another way? There can be product loss attributed to the box format.
 - Sherry: Shamrock requires a 2-hour window to deliver food. The concern is that the food won't stay good.
8. Closing
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