

# Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy

## General Action Team

6.18.20 ♦ 12:00 – 1:30 pm

### Meeting Notes

**Facilitator:** Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

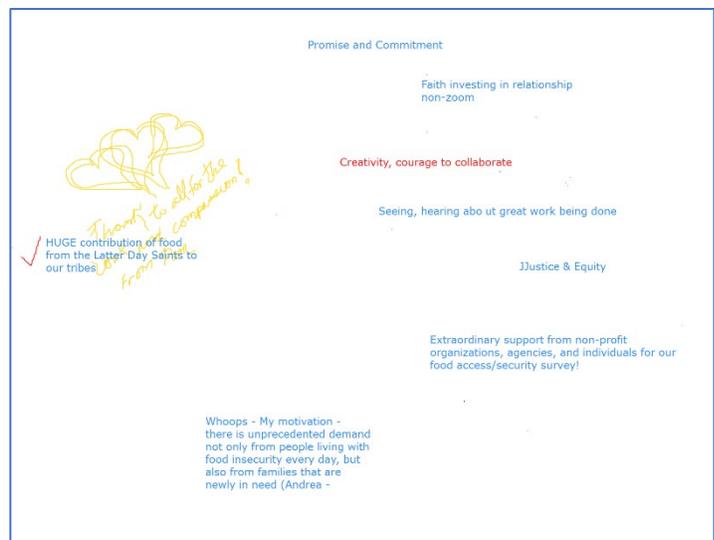
**Notes:** Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Katy Anderson, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Phelps Anderson
- Jane Braithwaite, Office of Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Brian Colon, NM State Auditor
- Josey Foo, Navajo Family Voices
- Allison Griffin, Cullari
- Bruce Hinrichs, NMSU Extension
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Derek Lin, New Mexico Voices for Children
- Jason New, NMDA
- Andrea Nash, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Brenda McKenna, Office of Congresswoman Deb Haaland
- Pam Roy, Farm to Table NM and NM Food and Ag Policy Council
- Phone: 505-449-7498
- Alice Perez, The Community Pantry
- Jackie Franke, First Nations Development Institute
- Roy Montibon, The Montibon Company
- Tsiporah Nephesh, New Mexico Thrives
- James Povijua, Center For Civic Policy, Policy Director
- Valerie Rangel, New Mexico Foundation
- Stephanie Rogus, NMSU and NM Dietetic Association.
- Brent Van Dyke, NM Association of Conservation Districts
- Michael Venticinque, NMFMA

#### I. **Welcome and Introductions.** Prompt: What is giving you motivation to do what you are doing?

- Extraordinary support from non-profit organizations, agencies, and individuals for our food access/security survey!
- Huge contribution of food to our tribes by the Latter Day Saints throughout the USA
- I'm just very excited to see multiple organizations working together. Thank you to all!
- I'm inspired because it feels like we are at a tipping point on various fronts. Time to step up to the moment
- I am very proud of my church for that contribution to the tribes.
- Excited about the possibilities of what we can do together in this moment.
- What an amazing group of caring hard working people!
- Thanks everyone for your love and compassion in this work. Onward we go! The hearts are mine to you all.



Zoom whiteboard re. what was giving people motivation to do what they are doing.



**NEW MEXICO FIRST**  
People. Ideas. Progress.

Please contact Sharon Berman at [sharon@nmfirst.org](mailto:sharon@nmfirst.org) if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.

Lilly mentioned that there were reductions and significant cuts to some programs. We know that when it comes to food systems, hunger and anti-poverty work that's the last place to make cuts. Please don't forget to stay in communication with legislators and community members about the importance of holding strong around importing resourcing around basic needs. The policy priorities document the group put together could be useful here.

Pam noted that it is a question of delicate balance. The LFC put in a 68-page report with many fine line items. One was cut from \$400k to \$204k. New funding/copayments to schools to pay for meals that might not have gotten paid for, originally \$600k, cut almost in half. She noted these are recommendations. Re. capital outlay, they did a full sweep. We all have to understand when we ask for money, we need active engagement with agencies, and fully utilize funds within that year. For example, the mobile matanza—funds that would have gone to Taos—was untouched. The money was available a year ago and it wasn't used. We have to be present and follow up.

Lilly noted that Village of Los Ranchos capital outlay was affected as well. She said to look for that communication from Pam, and NM First would amplify and echo that.

Andrea said they were waiting to see where things fall and was not terribly optimistic. The work of this and other groups has been helpful in informing discussions, serving as a launch point for the special session. We're trying to gently comment when possible, knowing the work they have to do.

Sherry echoed Andrea. The food banks did a push yesterday and the day before to get the word out about what we've been seeing re. hunger during the pandemic and what they anticipate in the next year. She said she is not hopeful but finds it's an opportunity to educate about hunger in the state even about non pandemic times.

Brent said the state will be strapped for cash and they are concerned about what may be swept. They appreciate the 2020 appropriations may be low-hanging fruit. They want to be sure funds are available for this year as districts are dependent on the allocation so they can function daily.

Lilly talked about the letter about democratic process and transparency during the session. Legislators responded in a bipartisan way that there was resonance with the letter and shared concern across parties. It can be done in inclusive and equitable ways including in rural, Tribal and Pueblo communities where food deserts, civic engagement deserts and broadband deserts (among others) may overlap. She gave a shoutout to legislators who took that feedback in stride. There is change at the NGO, grassroots and public/private partnerships levels.

Lilly asked Sherry lessons learned – how to keep it going and how to steward resources well. Sherry said they are supported almost entirely on private funds – community foundations, Governor's Office and others have been very supportive. Her concern was what might happen with the second and third wave of pandemic. People will have made their annual donations but the food banks will still be feeding people. "We're fortunate that we work very closely and are grateful we have partners in the state (pantries, shelters, food banks)." Food banks traditionally supply partner agencies. There's a vast network to feed hungry New Mexicans. They are also part of a national network of food banks "Feeding America," which brings additional support at the national level. She added that they are fortunate that people are aware of what's happening. The Policy Workgroup has worked together to keep our communities educated about how to get help and how to help others. Grateful to be working with those with whom she had never worked before.

Andrea noted that Roadrunner is primarily funded by individuals. It's almost mirrored the rate of the curve of the infections. They have had an influx of donations and now it's starting to taper off. That's the trend of the food banks nationwide. She noted that it is hard to predict the effect of unemployment, what happens when PPP runs out, what



the level of need may be. NM is now second in childhood hunger and in senior hunger, while before the pandemic NM was first in childhood hunger and third for senior hunger. She said it was hard to know how to continue with growing need, whether people had already given their holiday gifts, if workplace giving would take place at all (supports United Way and other nonprofits)?. What might that do as a ripple effect. So many things are in flux. Communicating the need and trying to meet the need, support each other as a group and as organizations to get through this together. No one is working in a vacuum, we are all working in collaboration.

Katy noted that from a programmatic side her concern was being forward thinking about which communities may be hit hardest. Especially through the second and third wave. How quickly to turn around and address those needs. Unemployment rate in different parts of the state affecting need.

Stephanie thanked everyone for their support getting the word out on the survey via their networks and social media. They extended the survey to June 26. The English language survey had been completed by 888 people, and 50 had completed the Spanish survey. 700 applications were incomplete but were usable. She is going to put out more word via the Albuquerque Journal to help get a few more surveys. Stephanie planned to write up a couple briefs on findings as soon as survey has closed. She'll send it out through the working group email. She invited people to contact her via email. She asked if those who hadn't shared the survey to help in the final push to do so through networks including listserv and social media. Her email: [srogus@nmsu.edu](mailto:srogus@nmsu.edu); survey on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/NMfoodaccesssurvey/>); survey on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/FoodNm>)

Lilly said that if you have a media release, NM broadcasters and NM press associations might help push the message.

Sherry added that food banks hold special events. They are uncertain whether those will happen. She added that in the last two months, the Food Depot doubled their food distribution. That is challenging to sustain financially.

Lilly noted that these were among the lessons learned about community efforts and relief.

Josie said we need a centralized method. Everybody is duplicating resources. Some groups are overlapping, doing things on their own, angry with government. It's a compliance-driven government, no fat for service. She said she saw a [video posted by Mr. Sosi](#). He had suggested an emergency plan for the government 4 years ago and it was ignored. She wishes the infrastructure would have been in place. Navajo Family Voices has been involved in manning hotlines and drive-throughs. Sunosti, like all other chapters, is on lock-down. Offices are closed. Some chapters like Sinosti went rogue and did it anyway. A wonderful drive through occurred – 175 carloads were served. Water, produce, milk, canned food, you name it. Variety-filled packet. This coming Monday they will be in Sheep Spring. They've been asked to try to arrange one in another place. It's an ongoing effort. There's a lot of grief as well. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, President Nez who has been leading a church funded caravan of food across the Navajo Nation. It was held last Friday on the fairground. The Navajo Nation is sitting on \$3 million dollars of funds because they can't allocate it.

- Lilly wondered if there were things that folks who were learning and hearing in more detail about what's going on the Navajo Nation could do to support the community efforts while still being respectful of sovereignty and each tribal entity's right to solve its own issues. Josey replied that she wished she knew the answer. Lilly replied that perhaps one of the things all of us can think about is how to be good allies, and to be open to getting it wrong, have it be redefined, and be flexible vs. an agenda about how to respond to folks. Josey added that her background in law and government allows her to understand limitations.

Valerie said NM Foundation had two different funds available. They had 40 applicants for their second wave of funding. The application process would be decided soon. There was funding for 501 c 3s and organizations working



with them. They aim to continue granting through winter and hopefully through the spring. Lilly gave shoutout to NM Foundation, which was leading in so many ways. The Native American Relief Fund was very intentional – the first round of funding went out to Tribal and Pueblo governments. They understood the needs and sent the resources out with not a lot of strings attached. The second round of funds would be for Native-led and Native-serving organizations.

Lilly added that when foundations work in ethical ways they have an advisory committee made up of diverse folks, like the NM Foundation. NM Foundation’s Vecino Fund is statewide, rapid cycle, and the applications are easy to complete –this is meeting communities where they are at. She added that the Con Alma Foundation also has funding available for basic needs. They were able to leverage one million dollars from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 75% of the fund is intended to go to basic needs. There is a link on the NM First [COVID website](#) on the “funding” tab.

Tsiporah said it looks like there would be huge cuts to Medicaid, which would be devastating to the people of NM. She felt hopeful that there was still a way to have input. She thought that feedback via social media might be the way to get the word out during the session. They have tried to make it more accessible.

Lilly noted that the Policy Workgroup went from a mighty group of 80 to a group of 400 to work together. “We can create systems change if we keep connected.”

Roy said that he had been a little out of the loop lately due to other deadlines. He had been having conversations with people around the state to figure out how to put together a grant writing initiative to benefit a lot of people in different ways. There are great grant writers in NM. Their project would create a pipeline for college students to work with and be mentored by grant writers while they put together grants for farmers, tribes, etc. The focus had initially been on agriculture but after conversations with Olivia Roanhorse, Roy noted the possibilities could go beyond that. Students could have backgrounds in various areas where grant writing experience could be pertinent to their education. He said he would start talking to universities, colleges and legislators to make it official and point students to it. It would create an entirely new grant writing talent pool. By addressing these issues it will have long term benefit for a lot of people across the state including Tribal entities. Should have some updates at the next meeting.

Lilly gave a shoutout to NM Coalition to Enhance Working Land, which was working on opportunities in food systems funding in a digestible way so folks can start planning their application.

