

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NEW MEXICO FIRST THIRTIETH TOWN HALL

Leading With Integrity: Advancing New Mexico

More than 70 participants gathered at the historic Montezuma Castle at the United World College USA near Las Vegas for New Mexico First's 30th Town Hall: "Leading with Integrity: Advancing New Mexico."

The participants agreed that New Mexico is at a crossroads. Now is the time to focus attention on the development of effective, principle-centered leadership to address the challenges of today and to realize a positive future. For years New Mexico has lingered near the bottom of many national lists that track positive attributes and at the top of lists that register deficiencies. New Mexico's human and natural resources are at risk, reflected, for example, in the number of young people who leave the state and in the increased disparity in income distribution. Effective, visionary leadership to preserve those resources needs to be developed and/or strengthened.

However, the Town Hall also recognized that New Mexico is at a unique time in its history. The new leadership and cooperative attitude have infused a sense of vigor based on the recognition that leadership can positively impact government, business and community arenas. The citizens are ready to address problems. We will increase pride in New Mexico through improved government services, economic development and individual community success. In short, we will define ourselves as leaders within the state and on national rankings.

The Town Hall identified many assets that should be preserved to maintain New Mexico's unique character. Four were highlighted as so essential that they must not be compromised through the lack of leadership: the cultural, historical, environmental and rural attributes that have attracted settlers, visitors and admirers to New Mexico for millennia.

What is good leadership?

Many styles of leadership exist, and different situations call for different types of leadership. While the Town Hall identified numerous personal and learned characteristics of good leadership, consensus emerged around the following themes, not prioritized:

- The long run. Good leaders are not only committed to ensuring sustained leadership, but are focused on the global perspective and New Mexico's place within it.
- Collaboration-minded. Good leaders build alliances and teams within, across and among organizations.
- Principles. Good leaders follow ethical and moral-based principles and values; they act with integrity, courage and dedication to their mission. They are trustworthy and accept accountability for their decisions and organizations.
- Vision. Good leaders share a vision of a better future and a willingness to take the risks necessary to achieve it. They inspire others to do the same.
- Role model and mentor. Good leaders lead by example and model competent, ethical behavior. They encourage, identify and develop emerging leaders and contribute to their community.
- Passion. Good leaders are motivated to take action. They are persistent and dedicated and take personal responsibility for their decisions.
- Communication. Good leaders articulate a vision that inspires others to pursue the group's objectives. They are open to other people and ideas.

Where does good leadership come from?

Great leadership comes from people whose great desire, preparation and integrity intersect with society's great desires, needs and opportunities. Leaders emerge from every type of family and socio-economic background. Today, the emphasis on collaboration has expanded the potential for leadership to many more people.

Commonly cited opportunities for developing leadership are informal relationships such as families, friends, and peer groups, as well as volunteer and extracurricular activities, work experience, and meaningful experiences of life. More formal vehicles include clubs, schools and civic and religious organizations. Also available are leadership organizations, career planning programs, internships, job shadowing, mentoring, formal education, the military and public safety professions. Unforeseen political events and personal tragedies, job changes and disasters also create opportunities for people to rise to leadership.

Effective methods of developing leadership include formal leadership training or curriculum and practical experiences, as well as appropriate feedback, self-reflection, understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, and listening.

While placing a person in a position of authority provides a base of responsibility, it does not always ensure success. Continued development of leadership skills is an important ingredient in forming an effective leader.

Many programs exist to expose potential leaders to the skills that are most useful in leading an organization or becoming a civic leader. However, these programs may lack coordination that would make them more effective.

What are the incentives and disincentives to lead?

One benefit of living in New Mexico is that its relatively small population provides an opportunity to make a difference. Prominent officials and leaders are largely accessible, and leaders can quickly emerge when problems need to be resolved. The Town Hall identified incentives and disincentives for the emergence of leadership. Examples include the opportunity to effect change and the costs in time, energy and privacy.

What does it mean to lead with integrity?

Leading with integrity begins with intention, personal responsibility, preparation and competence: a clear sense of personal identity, capacity and values and taking action without regard to personal gain. Leadership with integrity requires personal and collective accountability and responsibility, which begins with reflection and results in correcting the gaps between what we say and what we do. It includes positive, value-based decision making which considers all perspectives.

What does it mean to follow with integrity?

Leadership requires followers. Followers must be informed and loyal. They provide support for the leader and develop their own skills to assume leadership positions as the opportunities arise. Followers participate in many ways. Perhaps the most obvious is voting, which must be encouraged at every opportunity.

Recommendations for advancing New Mexico through development of leadership with integrity

1. A CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN NEW MEXICO

Many of the functions could be performed through collaboration among organizations that already exist or would be created to focus attention on leadership. The Town Hall Implementation Team would have a role in identifying or creating the organization, which could carry one of these suggested names: the “Center for the Advancement of Leadership in New Mexico” or the “New Mexico Leadership Development Institute.” Details were as follows:

- **Mission:** Provide leadership skills training accessible by New Mexicans from all regions and sectors. This includes offering life-long leadership skills development, leadership internships and certification programs.
- **Objective:** Provide a forum for a New Mexico-based information exchange that examines best practices in leadership. Information would be shared utilizing a systematic approach that includes assessment, planning, prioritization, implementation, evaluation and feedback. The Town Hall also acknowledges the importance of continuing to encourage ethical behavior. Award programs such as “The Samaritan Counseling Center’s Ethics in Business Awards” and the “Governor’s Distinguished Public Service Awards” should be examined as potential role models.
- **Promotion:** The center would promote excellence in leadership with integrity and ethics in business, government and community through programs that recognize success. The center would partner with media to market the advancement of leadership in New Mexico. It would support existing programs, encourage professional and community organizations to implement recognition programs and publish a leadership magazine.
- **Networks:** The center would catalogue leadership programs that serve adults and youth. It would gather data using evaluative criteria such as basic leadership skills, goal setting, problem solving, decision making, strategic planning, character development, parenting skills, conflict resolution, civic responsibility and role modeling. The center would facilitate leveraging of existing resources using systems alignment. The center also would establish links with educational institutions and community programs through modern communication technologies. These activities would develop the basis for a statewide outreach and education effort: a virtual leadership development institute.
- **Education:** The teaching of leadership, ethics and integrity to all students at all levels of education should be integrated through curriculum and classroom management. All teachers should be prepared to exemplify leadership behavior for their students.

2. STATE EMPLOYEE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Governor’s Office should conduct an inventory of existing state government leadership training resources and coordinate these state programs with existing external leadership development programs, including those developed by the center.

3. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Town Hall believes that leaders emerge to address important issues and to propose solutions. A strategic plan is a necessary catalyst to focus the efforts of New Mexico’s current and new leaders. The Governor’s Office should take the lead in proposing a process to create the New Mexico Strategic Plan. The plan would address the state’s most pressing problems and provide a blueprint for strategic planning at all levels of government. The Strategic Planning Town Hall’s implementation team should re-engage the state executive and legislative branches to promote the plan. We request that the plan include a commitment to the leadership development of state employees.

New Mexico should also consider adding evaluation criteria covering community leadership and public service to competitively awarded state contracts.

4. ETHICAL STANDARDS AND LEADERSHIP

The Town Hall recommends a partnership between citizens and government to form an Ethics Initiative Committee responsible for:

- The adoption of and support for a model statewide code of ethics.
- A review of existing statutes, regulations and codes and an examination of potential opportunities to determine whether adequate safeguards are in place to ensure ethical behavior in all branches of government.
- Recommendations for measures needed to fill any gaps, including enforcement gaps.
- Studying other state models for monitoring compliance with ethical and leadership standards.

5. VOTE

All New Mexicans should exercise their right to vote, as this is fundamental to the democratic process. The Town Hall acknowledges that with the “Help America Vote 2002” act, positive changes are under way. The state should assist by enhanced use of electronic technologies that increase and simplify access to voters’ manuals and other election materials. Also, the concept of “vote-where-you-congregate” by expanding polling locations should be considered along with Internet voting. A curriculum to educate all students in voter and civic responsibilities should become standard in New Mexico’s schools.

6. MINI TOWN HALLS

The Town Hall Implementation Team should consider developing a partnership with the Children’s Cabinet to conduct a pilot mini town hall that would focus on issues of importance to a community. Support for this pilot would be based on a public-private partnership.

Conclusion

New Mexico over the years has benefited from hard-working and dedicated leaders. Leadership continues to be a complex concept to define and requires different skills in different situations. Leadership requires passion, modeling ethical and moral behavior, accountability and a commitment for the common good. New Mexico is blessed with a rich history and a diverse and enthusiastic citizenry. It is up to all of us to encourage good leadership, become leaders ourselves and use the diversity of our state to grow new leaders for the future.