

# New Mexico Rural Development Roundtable



## Summary of New Mexico Rural Development Roundtable

Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 26, 2009

### Those in Attendance:

Don Albrecht – Western Rural Development Center  
Jeff Bader – New Mexico State University Extension  
Sharlene Begay-Platero – Navajo Nation  
Jon Boren – New Mexico State University Extension  
Jacqueline Buchanan – U.S. Forest Service  
Terry Crawford – New Mexico State University – Department of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Business  
Joyce Fierro – Bureau of Land Management  
Herb Greenwall – New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions  
Renee Julien – New Mexico Rural Development Response Council  
Steve Kadas – USDA – NRCS  
Michael Patrick – New Mexico State University Extension  
Salomon Ramirez – U.S. Forest Service  
Charles Siepel – New Mexico State University Extension

### Session One: What do we value about the rural areas of New Mexico?

Participants were asked to list their two-three most important positive features about New Mexico's rural areas. Their responses were:

1. There is an abundance of natural resources with scenic open spaces.
2. There are strong family traditions and a strong work ethic. Communities support and help their residents.
3. Rural communities have a resource-based economy.

## Session Two: Priorities for Strengthening the Future of Rural Areas

Participants were asked: As you ponder the future of your state's rural areas, which of the following general rural development topics would you (personally) identify as being of highest priority to promoting the long-term survival and strength of these areas? That is, what **THREE** broad areas listed below would you select as being of "highest priority" for the future of rural counties and communities in your state?

- Economic Development
- Economic/Social Inequality and Poverty
- Education and Workforce Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Housing
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Leadership, Citizen Participation and Rural Public Policy
- Population Change/Migration Patterns
- Public Land Use and Management
- Public Services/Public Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy Development
- Rural and Entrepreneurial Development
- Rural-Urban Interface and Growth Management
- Water, Biodiversity and other Natural Resources
- Other areas not listed above (please list):

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Then the group narrowed down the individual responses into the following three priorities:

1. Water, biodiversity and resource conservation. There is a need to conserve resources and at the same time enhance the value of resources through such means as renewable energy.
2. Economic development through entrepreneurial development.
3. Leadership development, citizen participation and public policy.

## Session Three: Digging Deeper into the Three Priority Areas

Next participants were asked to take these three priority areas they identified during Session Two and identify challenges and strategies/initiatives that could be launched to address the challenges. Their responses were:

1. Water, biodiversity and resource conservation. There is a need to conserve resources and at the same time enhance the value of resource through such means as renewable energy.
  - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in New Mexico
    - i. New Mexico is a part of the desert southwest. All life, agriculture, and developments are dependent on scarce water resources.
    - ii. Water is being transferred from agriculture to urban uses.
    - iii. If used wisely, water can be recycled and its value extended. But if used unwisely, it can become degraded.

- iv. Agricultural land is being subdivided.
  - v. There is a need to develop other resources and enhance the value of the resources being utilized. Renewable energy represents a major opportunity. A significant problem is a lack of infrastructure to get wind and solar energy out of the state.
  - vi. There are competing interests for the use of natural resources, including preservation and protection.
  - vii. Some resources, such as oil and minerals, are being depleted. It would be helpful if the state were not so dependent on oil revenues.
- b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
- i. Educate the general public and policy makers on the value of natural resources and the importance of conserving water and other resources and the principles of wise resource utilization.
  - ii. The rural areas of the west need a consistent voice at the national level from people who understand the west and the issues and concerns of the residents of the rural west.
  - iii. There is a need to find a way to both conserve and enhance the value of resources.
  - iv. Provide a means where the residents of rural communities can be active participants in resource decisions.
2. Economic development through entrepreneurial development
- a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in New Mexico
- i. There is a lack of jobs and there is a perception that there are few opportunities. Consequently, many areas experience a net outmigration.
  - ii. There is a lack of diversity in the jobs that are available.
  - iii. Attempts to attract outside employers as an economic development strategy have significant drawbacks including the fact that there is a lack of commitment to the community.
  - iv. Many young people would like to stay in their hometown, but they perceive a lack of opportunities.
  - v. There is a lack of understanding about how to encourage entrepreneurial development in native-American communities that are more community based and less individualistic.
- b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
- i. Develop a formalized K-12 curriculum on entrepreneurial development.
  - ii. Provide a career day at elementary and middle schools.
  - iii. Teach adults how to find and seek grants, grant writing skills, how to develop business plans, and the other skills necessary for expanding or establishing their own business.
  - iv. Help people understand the diversity of opportunities that exist for entrepreneurial development in a global world. Help provide the skills to help them succeed in this global world.

3. Leadership development, citizen participation and public policy
  - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in New Mexico
    - i. People who make decisions for rural communities are not always locals and the decisions made don't always represent the views of local people. People will buy in better if the decision is locally made.
    - ii. It is important to provide each person with opportunities to voice their opinion.
    - iii. The younger generation tends to be involved in different ways. We should find a means of helping them be involved.
  - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
    - i. Develop training for new community leaders that includes the nuts and bolts of what is expected of community leaders, as well as leadership and communication skills.
    - ii. The WRDC and land-grant universities could help communities obtain grants by providing grant-writing training.
    - iii. The WRDC could assist with building regional or multi-state collaborative teams.
    - iv. A crash course in across-generation communication could be provided.
    - v. Develop leadership development programs for K-12 schools.

#### **Session Four: Research and Extension Needs and Potential Partners**

Finally, participants were asked to identify what they felt are the most critical roles that should be played by your state's land-grant universities in relation to the THREE priority areas identified in Session Two and discussed in Session Three. Their responses were:

1. Research Needs
  - a. Research to better understand when and under what circumstances renewable energy development becomes economically beneficial?
  - b. Provide a better understanding of how to encourage entrepreneurial development in Native-American communities that are less individualistic and more community-based.
  
2. Extension Needs
  - a. Communicate and educate the public about the benefits and potential problems (including legal aspects) with renewable energy development.
  - b. Provide a clearinghouse of science-based information in an understandable form.
  - c. Develop education programs to help the general public and policy makers have a better understanding of issues surrounding resource use and conservation.
  
3. Partners
  - a. Federal agencies including the BLM, Forest Service, NRCS, RD, FSA, EDA and BIA.
  - b. Navajo Nation and other tribal entities
  - c. Public school districts
  - d. Land grant and other universities and community colleges
  - e. New Mexico Rural Alliance
  - f. NACO – New Mexico Association of Counties
  - g. State and local government
  - h. Local chamber and economic development offices