

One Mission, Many Voices

Listening, Learning, and Building Stronger Homeless Response Systems in New Mexico

PREPARED FOR

Sarita Nair

Cabinet Secretary
Department of Workforce Solutions

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To the communities who opened their doors, shared their stories, and trusted this process. You did not simply inform this work, you shaped it. Your courage and your care for one another reminded us of what is possible when people come together with purpose.

*You showed us the true meaning of **querencia** — that deep sense of belonging, of place, of home that lives not in a building but in the bonds between people. This work is yours as much as it is ours.*



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With over 25 years of experience in program evaluation and public health, Sindy leads statewide, multi-sector initiatives tackling complex challenges in prevention, behavioral health, housing instability, and homelessness. Through her extensive work with rural and Tribal communities, she leverages cultural responsiveness and data storytelling to illuminate regional inequities for lasting, systems-level change.



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Raised in rural New Mexico, Sebastian brings over a decade of experience in workforce training, business development, and partnership strategy. He aligns education, business, and government partners to design workforce models with measurable community impact — balancing mission and margin to turn potential into progress.

Introduction

New Mexico's homelessness service providers have long played a central role in the state's response to housing instability. Across urban, rural, and Tribal communities, these organizations have sustained essential services, built trusted relationships, and adapted to growing and changing needs with commitment and resilience. Their experience has also made clear that lasting progress depends not only on program delivery, but on stronger organizational infrastructure, a supported workforce, and strategic state partnership.

In July 2025, the Statewide Capacity Assessment created a formal opportunity for providers to identify the conditions necessary to strengthen that foundation. Their input produced a clear set of priorities across physical infrastructure, workforce development, and organizational capacity. The assessment did more than document need; it provided a practical framework for action and a shared roadmap for collaboration between the Office of Housing and the organizations leading this work on the ground.

The Office of Housing responded with a coordinated set of investments aligned to those priorities. These included workforce development support for nonprofit leaders and frontline providers, winter readiness funding to help organizations maintain service continuity during periods of peak demand, building repair funds for domestic violence shelters, and expanded resources for students and families experiencing homelessness in three school districts. To complement these investments, the Office invested in a comprehensive evaluation of this statewide response to homelessness, capturing not just individual program outcomes, but the collective impact of coordinated investments. In addition, the Office commissioned a Promising Practices Evaluation to identify, assess, and elevate effective service delivery approaches emerging from providers across the state. Taken together, these efforts reflect a deliberate strategy to strengthen the people, organizations, and systems at the center of New Mexico's response to homelessness.

This evaluation documents more than a set of investments or program outcomes. It reflects a collective effort shaped by many voices across New Mexico, including providers, public agencies, evaluators, and community members with lived experience. Each brought insight, experience, and commitment to a shared undertaking. Together, their contributions underscore the power of coordinated action and shared responsibility. What emerges is not only a record of what was done, but a clearer understanding of what is possible when communities and state systems come together around one mission: supporting New Mexicans experiencing homelessness with dignity, stability, and care.

Increasing Capacity in New Mexico

The Office of Housing was established in 2024 through an executive order issued by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. The Office was charged with advancing solutions to support affordable housing development across New Mexico and with addressing the needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness throughout the state. In the spring of 2025, the Office was transferred to the Department of Workforce Solutions under the leadership of Cabinet Secretary Sarita Nair.

Under this structure, the Office of Housing adopted a distinctive approach to supporting communities serving individuals experiencing homelessness across the state. The Office created structured spaces for community engagement, recognizing that those closest to the work hold the deepest understanding of local needs. Community members were positioned as active contributors of expertise, insight, and service, bringing forward the knowledge necessary to shape solutions responsive to the populations they served. This approach reflected a broader conviction that durable, effective responses to homelessness are built when state support is paired with the leadership and experience of those working directly within their communities.

Communities across New Mexico identified the barriers they faced and the resources they needed, and the Office of Housing structured its planning and funding decisions around that feedback. The Office used surveys, interviews, and direct conversations to gather input, treating community perspectives as a central component of the planning process. This participatory framework represented a meaningful departure from more centralized planning approaches by ensuring that New Mexico's urban, rural, and Tribal communities helped define priorities based on local experience. Research suggests that trust-based engagement models can improve cultural responsiveness and strengthen alignment with local conditions, particularly in rural and geographically diverse communities (Pelletier et al., 2020).

By centering local expertise within the planning process, the Office developed a more collaborative partnership model with community stakeholders. This approach fostered shared ownership that can strengthen the long-term legitimacy and effectiveness of state-led initiatives (Price et al., 2024). When community members are treated as subject matter experts, resulting strategies are often viewed as more credible and responsive by participating communities. This collaborative methodology encouraged a more reciprocal relationship between state institutions and local communities, reinforcing the value of community-driven problem solving.

Leadership and Direct Service Provider Academies

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Leadership and Direct Service Provider Academies

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Executive Summary

The New Mexico Housing and Homelessness Workforce Training Initiative supports professional development for leaders and frontline service providers working to address housing instability and homelessness across the state.

Through a partnership between CNM Ingenuity, New Mexico Highlands University, SBS Evaluation & Program Development Specialists, the New Mexico Office of Housing, and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, two workforce training programs were developed to strengthen leadership and frontline service skills for professionals working in housing stability, homelessness response, and related community services across New Mexico. The Leadership Training Series focuses on organizational leadership and systems challenges facing housing and homelessness service providers. The Frontline Service Provider Training Series builds on this work by providing practical training for professionals working directly with individuals and families experiencing housing instability.

Participants represent organizations serving communities across 30 of New Mexico's 33 counties, including rural and Tribal areas where housing and homelessness services are often limited. The program emphasizes practical tools, peer learning, and collaboration among organizations serving communities across the state.

Together, the Leadership and Frontline Provider training series support the workforce responsible for addressing housing instability while strengthening connections among service providers across New Mexico.

Program Highlights

Leadership Training Series

Metric	Summary
Applicants	100
Participants	51
Organizations Represented	40+
Training Sessions	5
Community Conversations	5

Key focus areas included leadership development, workforce recruitment and retention, crisis response, sustainable funding systems, and data storytelling for organizational impact.

Frontline Service Provider Training Series

Metric	Summary
Applicants	120+
Participants Selected	104
Organizations Represented	56+
Training Sessions	5
Community Conversations	5

Training topics included purpose-driven storytelling, crisis response and incident debriefing, trauma-informed communication, severe mental illness, de-escalation techniques, and collaborative service coordination.

Program Reach

Program	Participants
Leadership Training Series	51
Frontline Service Provider Training Series	104
Total Workforce Participants	155

Participants represent organizations providing housing and homelessness services across urban, rural, and Tribal communities throughout New Mexico.

Demand for both training series exceeded available capacity, demonstrating strong statewide interest in professional development opportunities focused on housing stability, homelessness response, and community-centered service delivery.

Program Overview

This report summarizes the implementation, outcomes, and impact of the Leadership Training Series and Frontline Service Provider Training Series delivered by CNM Ingenuity in partnership with New Mexico Highlands University and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions.

These programs were developed to strengthen leadership capacity and frontline service skills among professionals working in housing stability, homelessness response, and related community service systems across New Mexico.

The Leadership Series focuses on organizational leadership and systems challenges facing housing and homelessness service providers. The Frontline Service Provider series builds on this work by providing practical training for staff working directly with individuals and families experiencing housing instability.

Together, these programs support workforce development for organizations addressing housing instability and homelessness while strengthening coordination among agencies serving communities throughout New Mexico.

Program Metric	Outcome
Leadership Participants	51
Frontline Participants	104
Total Participants	155
Counties Represented	30
Organizations Represented	56+
Training Sessions Delivered	10
Community Conversations Delivered	10
Stipends Processed	104

Program Administration and Systems Infrastructure

CNM Ingenuity established several operational systems to support program delivery, participant engagement, and reporting. This included customized registration and vetting systems, Canvas learning environments for course materials and make-up modules, Zoom coordination for trainings and community conversations, and shared document repositories for partner access to program materials. The team also developed attendance tracking tied to stipend eligibility and coordinated stipend processing, compliance documentation, participant communications, and reporting activities throughout the duration of the initiative. SBS Evaluation was engaged to design the core learning objectives for all trainers and construct the comprehensive evaluation for the training system. These systems allowed the team to manage a statewide cohort while maintaining consistent communication, documentation, and reporting for NMHU and DWS.

Cross-Functional Program Delivery

Successful implementation of the Leadership Training Series and Frontline Service Provider Training Series required coordination across multiple CNM Ingenuity departments. Program staff led participant recruitment, instructor engagement, curriculum coordination, learner support, attendance tracking, evaluation administration, and overall program delivery. The Technology Team developed and maintained registration systems, Canvas learning environments, Zoom infrastructure, participant communication systems, and technical support processes. In addition, the team supported data collection, attendance reporting, survey administration, and data analysis activities that informed program evaluation and reporting.

The Business Development Team supported project planning, stakeholder engagement, partner coordination, contract administration, reporting requirements, and communications with NMHU, SBS Evaluation and DWS. The Marketing Team developed promotional materials, managed participant outreach campaigns, supported recruitment efforts, and helped ensure broad awareness of both training opportunities across New Mexico. Finance and accounting staff supported stipend processing, instructor payments, compliance documentation, fiscal oversight, and payment reconciliation throughout the initiative.

This cross-functional approach allowed CNM Ingenuity to successfully recruit vet, train, and support 155 participants across New Mexico while coordinating 10 training sessions, 10 Community Conversations, instructor onboarding, evaluation activities, learning management systems, participant communications, data collection and reporting, and stipend administration. The initiative demonstrates CNM Ingenuity's ability to manage complex workforce development projects requiring collaboration across programmatic, technical, operational, marketing, business development, and financial functions.

Partner Coordination

The program has been delivered through ongoing coordination between CNM Ingenuity, New Mexico Highlands University, SBS Evaluation and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. Regular project management meetings supported alignment on curriculum development, participant outreach, evaluation documentation, and reporting requirements. CNM Ingenuity also worked closely with project partners to provide instructor documentation, training materials, attendance data, and evaluation resources to support program oversight and reporting.

Cohort Vetting and Selection Process

To ensure the Leadership and Frontline Provider Series reached individuals positioned to create meaningful impact, CNM Ingenuity designed and implemented a customized registration and vetting process. The process prioritized leaders whose work directly supports housing stability, homelessness response, and frontline service coordination across New Mexico.

Customized Registration and Screening

Rather than using a simple open enrollment model, the project team developed a registration process that collected information about each applicant’s role, organization, service area, and community impact. This allowed the team to evaluate both interest in the program and alignment with program goals and target populations. Applications were reviewed to assemble a cohort representing organizations actively engaged in addressing housing insecurity, homelessness, and related community challenges.

Vetting Criteria

Participants were prioritized based on several criteria:

- Direct impact on housing and homelessness services
- Leadership responsibilities within community organizations

- Representation from rural and Tribal communities
- Organizations with regional or statewide service reach
- Cross-sector representation including nonprofit organizations, community providers, and government agencies

This approach ensured the cohort was strategically assembled to maximize program impact.

Project Management and Instructor Vetting

Program delivery was managed through coordination between CNM Ingenuity's Program and Technology teams. The Program Team led curriculum development, instructor recruitment, learner engagement, and training delivery, while the Technology Team supported registration systems, Canvas administration, Zoom coordination, and participant troubleshooting.

A structured instructor recruitment and vetting process ensured that training was delivered by instructors with relevant expertise and experience working within New Mexico's housing and community service systems.

Instructor outreach included CNM Ingenuity's existing instructor network as well as community-based experts recommended by project partners. Each potential instructor met with the project team to review alignment with program goals, instructional capacity, and experience working with diverse community audiences.

Final instructor selection prioritized subject matter expertise, experience within housing and community service systems, ability to engage community-based learners, and availability within the program timeline.
Instructor feedback was overwhelmingly positive across both academies. Instructors consistently reported feeling supported by the program team and indicated strong interest in participating in future training opportunities. Feedback highlighted the effectiveness of program coordination, communication, instructional support, and participant engagement strategies implemented throughout the initiative.

Leadership Training Series

Leadership Training Sessions and Instructional Expertise

The Leadership Training Series was intentionally designed to draw on the expertise of instructors with deep experience working within New Mexico's housing, behavioral health, nonprofit, and public service systems. Prioritizing local instructional expertise ensured that the training content reflected the operational realities of organizations serving individuals and families experiencing housing instability across the state.

Instructors were selected through a structured vetting process led by CNM Ingenuity's program team. This process evaluated subject matter expertise, instructional experience, familiarity with New Mexico service systems, and the ability to deliver practical, applied learning for community-based leaders. The result was a training series delivered by professionals with extensive experience working directly within the systems the program aims to strengthen.

Each training session focused on a specific leadership challenge commonly faced by housing and homelessness service organizations. Sessions emphasized practical strategies that participants could apply within their own organizations and communities.

Applicant Pool and Final Cohort

The program received more than 100 initial registrations and expressions of interest. After review, 51 participants were approved for the Leadership cohort representing more than 40 organizations across New Mexico.

Leadership Training Session 1
From Mission to Impact: Advancing Initiatives Through Healing and Community-Centered Leadership
January 30, 2026
Instructor: Anna Nelson, PhD, LCSW

Dr. Nelson is a New Mexico-based behavioral health leader and licensed clinical social worker with extensive experience supporting community organizations and service systems. Her work focuses on trauma-informed leadership, organizational development, and strengthening community-based service networks.

This session focused on helping leaders translate organizational mission into measurable community impact while working in complex housing and homelessness service environments. Participants explored how leadership practices influence staff wellbeing, program alignment, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding how trauma-informed leadership approaches support staff resilience and organizational effectiveness
- Identifying strategies to align organizational mission with measurable community impact
- Applying community-centered leadership approaches when working within complex service systems

Leadership Training Session 2
Recruitment, Retention, and Honoring Lived Experience
February 13, 2026
Instructor: Ali Sillas, LCSW
Director of Youth Behavioral Health & Wellbeing, Future Focused Education

Ali Sillas brings extensive experience in workforce development, behavioral health services, and cross-sector collaboration across New Mexico. Her work focuses on strengthening pathways for youth and community members to enter human service professions.

This session addressed workforce challenges facing housing and social service organizations, including staff shortages, burnout, and high turnover. Participants explored leadership practices that support staff wellbeing, trauma-informed supervision, and workforce development strategies that strengthen long-term staff retention.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding workforce challenges affecting housing and social service organizations
- Identifying strategies to improve recruitment and retention within mission-driven organizations
- Exploring "grow-your-own" workforce models that create sustainable career pathways into housing and human service professions

Leadership Training Session 3
Critical Incident Debrief and Crisis Response for Community Service Organizations
February 27, 2026
Instructor: Amy Suman, MS, CPT

Amy Suman is an experienced educator and public sector leader in New Mexico with extensive background in crisis response training, leadership development, and statewide program administration.

This training prepared leaders to respond to critical incidents that may occur within housing programs, shelters, and community service environments. Participants explored structured approaches to incident response, documentation, and staff support following crisis situations.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding structured approaches for responding to critical incidents within community service environments
- Applying a seven-phase critical incident debrief framework to support staff and organizational recovery
- Strengthening documentation and communication practices following crisis events

Leadership Training Session 4

Designing Funding Systems That Endure: Sustainable Financing for Housing and Community Services
March 13, 2026
Instructor: Anita F. Córdova
Founder, Transformative Strategies, LLC

Anita Córdova is a New Mexico-based nonprofit and housing systems strategist with extensive experience in funding strategy, organizational development, and capacity building for community-based organizations. She previously served as Chief Advancement Officer at Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless and has helped secure significant funding for programs serving vulnerable populations.

This session focused on helping leaders understand and navigate the complex funding systems that support housing and homelessness services. Participants examined strategies for aligning resources with program needs while building sustainable funding structures.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding how housing and community service funding systems operate
- Identifying risks associated with fragmented funding streams
- Applying strategies to strengthen long-term program sustainability through integrated funding models

Leadership Training Session 5

Data Storytelling and Communicating the Stories of Our Communities
March 27, 2026
Instructor: Dr. Sara Ann Mason
Data Analyst, Los Alamos National Laboratory

Dr. Mason brings extensive experience in operational data analysis and organizational performance improvement. Her work focuses on helping organizations translate complex data into clear insights that support decision-making and program improvement.
This session focused on strengthening leaders' ability to communicate program impact through both quantitative data and community narratives. Participants explored practical strategies for translating operational data into compelling stories that inform stakeholders and support funding opportunities.

Learning outcomes included:

- Identifying meaningful data points that demonstrate program impact
- Translating service data into reports, presentations, and funding narratives
- Developing data storytelling strategies that communicate outcomes to funders, policymakers, and community stakeholders

Community Conversations

Each Leadership Training session was followed by a facilitated Community Conversation designed to reinforce the learning objectives of the training. These discussions provided space for participants to reflect on how the concepts applied within their own organizations, share challenges from their communities, and collaborate with peers working across housing, behavioral health, and social service systems. The Community Conversations

helped strengthen peer learning networks and encouraged cross-organizational collaboration among service providers working throughout New Mexico.

Leadership Training Schedule

Training	Topic	Date	Instructor
Leadership Training Session 1	From Mission to Impact: Advancing Initiatives Through Healing and Community-Centered Leadership	Jan 30, 2026	Dr. Anna Nelson
Leadership Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Feb 6, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Leadership Training Session 2	Recruitment, Retention, and Honoring Lived Experience	Feb 13, 2026	Ali Sillas
Leadership Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Feb 20, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Leadership Training Session 3	Critical Incident Debrief and Crisis Response	Feb 27, 2026	Amy Suman
Leadership Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Mar 6, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Leadership Training Session 4	Designing Funding Systems That Endure	Mar 13, 2026	Anita Córdova
Leadership Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Mar 20, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Leadership Training Session 5	Data Storytelling	Mar 27, 2026	Dr. Sara Mason
Leadership Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Apr 3, 2026	Facilitated Discussion

Leadership Participant Attendance and Engagement

The Leadership Training Series launched with 51 enrolled participants representing organizations working across housing stability, homelessness response, and community support systems throughout New Mexico.

The first session on January 30, 2026 saw 42 participants in attendance (82%), reflecting strong initial engagement for a voluntary professional development program serving leaders in demanding community-facing roles.

Attendance across later sessions reflects the realities of participants working in housing and homelessness services. The most common reasons participants cited for absences were work responsibilities and health-related issues.

Community Conversations were optional sessions designed to reinforce learning and encourage cross-organizational discussion.

Leadership Attendance

Date	Participants Attending	Attendance Rate
Jan 30, 2026	42	82%
***Feb 6, 2026**	25	49%
Feb 13, 2026	34	67%
***Feb 20, 2026**	16	31%
Feb 27, 2026	30	59%
***Mar 6, 2026**	14	27%
Mar 13, 2026	35	69%

***Mar 20, 2026**	10	20%
Mar 27, 2026	28	55%
***Apr 3, 2026**	8	16%

**Indicates Community Conversation. Community conversations are optional.*

Leadership Outcomes

Methods

Matched pre- and post-survey responses were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to examine changes in participants' knowledge and confidence across five training learning objectives.

Analysis of Participant Outcomes

Paired pre and post-test data were analyzed for all five leadership academy sessions. Participant response rates demonstrated moderate variability across sessions, ranging from 50% to 70%. Evaluation findings indicate a robust increase in participant knowledge across all indicators. Statistically significant improvements ($p < .05$) were observed in all measured areas with the exception of two domains: 1. The translation of organizational missions into measurable outcomes using logic models or theories of change and 2. The comprehension of core elements of a developmental workforce approach, including ongoing skill assessment, coaching, high quality supervision, and sustained investment in staff growth. Despite these outliers, the aggregate findings suggest the curriculum effectively enhanced both theoretical knowledge and self-reported application confidence. These data support the efficacy of the Office of Housing's initiative to bolster statewide capacity for providers serving populations experiencing homelessness. The following table provides a comprehensive summary of knowledge and confidence metrics across the Leadership Academy modules.

Pre-and Post-Training Changes in Knowledge and Confidence				
Outcomes	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Mean Change	p-value
Mission to Impact: Advancing Initiatives Through Healing and Community Centered Leadership (N=35)				
Outcomes	**Pre Mean**	**Post Mean**	**Mean Change**	**p-value**
Understanding collective trauma	2.66	4.4	1.74	**p<.001**
Cultural capital confidence	3.4	4.03	0.63	**p<.001**
Healing-informed leadership	3.66	4.09	0.43	**p=.002**
Ethical leaderhip decisions	3.8	4.11	0.31	**p=.014**
Translating mission to outcomes	3.43	3.6	0.17	p=.245
Recruitment, Retention and Honoring Lived Experience: Building Equitable and Sustainable Workforce Pathways (N=27)				
Developmental workforce understanding	3.63	4.15	0.52	p=.054
Retention structures understanding	3.89	4.33	0.44	p=.037
Community of care structures	4.04	4.33	0.3	p=.043
Grow-our-own workforce pathways	3.3	4.11	0.78	**p<.001**
Supervision and support systems	3.52	4.15	0.63	**p<.001**
Critical Incident Debrief and Crisis Response for Community Service Organizations (N=25)				
Identifying critical incidents and risk assessment	3.15	4.35	1.64	**p=.003**
Evaluating emotional responses to critical incidents	3.5	4.15	0.64	**p<.001**
Trauma-informed resilience strategies	3.5	4.31	0.8	**p<.001**
Applying the 7-phase Critical Incident Debriefing model	2.54	4.14	1.6	**p<.001**
Critical incident prevention and migration strategies	3.31	4.04	0.72	**p<.001**
Financial Stewardship & Supporting Providers in Diversifying Funding (N=25)				
Funding literacy inleaderhip practices	3.08	4	0.92	**p<.001**
Integrated funding model skills	2.92	3.6	0.68	**p=.003**
Funding strategy alignment with context	3.36	4.2	0.84	**p<.001**
Recognition of structural funding risks	3.36	4.08	0.72	**p<.001**
Discussing funding strategies with leadership/funders	3.08	3.96	0.88	**p<.001**
Data Storytelling (N=28)				
Using data to demonstrate organizational impact	3.71	4.36	0.64	**p<.001**
Selecting quantitative and qualitative data	4.07	4.5	0.43	**p<.005**
Telling compelling data stories	3.79	4.32	0.54	**p<.003**
Using structured data storytelling frameworks	3.39	4.21	0.82	**p<.001**
Using performance indicators to evaluate impact	3.68	4.25	0.57	**p<.001**

Frontline Service Provider Training Series

Building on the Leadership Training Series, CNM Ingenuity launched the Frontline Service Provider Training Series on March 12, 2026.

The Frontline Service Provider Training Series was designed to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and confidence of professionals working directly with individuals and families experiencing housing instability, homelessness, behavioral health challenges, and other complex barriers to stability. While the Leadership Training Series focused on organizational strategy and systems-level challenges, the Frontline Series emphasized practical tools and approaches that participants could immediately apply within their daily work.
Instructors were selected through a structured vetting process led by CNM Ingenuity and project partners.

Priority was given to instructors with extensive experience working within housing, behavioral health, public safety, and community service systems in New Mexico. Drawing upon years of statewide implementation experience and deep theoretical knowledge, instructors designed highly interactive content tailored directly to the practical realities faced by New Mexico's frontline providers.

Each training session focused on a specific area of professional practice commonly encountered by service providers working with individuals experiencing housing instability and homelessness.

Applicant Pool and Final Cohort

The program received more than 120 registrations from organizations across New Mexico. After review and vetting, 104 participants were selected representing 56 organizations serving communities throughout the state.

Participants include case managers, outreach specialists, housing program staff, behavioral health providers, social service coordinators, and frontline supervisors responsible for direct service delivery.

Frontline Training Session 1

Critical Incident Debrief
March 12, 2026
Instructor: Amy Suman, MS, CPT

Amy Suman is an experienced educator and public sector leader with extensive experience in crisis response training, leadership development, and statewide program administration. Her work has focused on preparing organizations and professionals to effectively respond to critical incidents while supporting staff wellbeing and organizational resilience.

This session focused on helping frontline providers recognize, respond to, and recover from critical incidents that occur within housing programs, shelters, outreach settings, and community service environments. Participants explored practical approaches to incident prevention, crisis management, documentation, communication, and post-incident recovery. Through case studies, scenarios, and facilitated discussion, participants examined how trauma-informed critical incident debriefing can support both individual and organizational resilience following traumatic events.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding how to identify and assess critical incidents and potential threats.
- Applying trauma-informed strategies to support individuals and teams following a crisis event.
- Implementing structured critical incident debriefing practices to support recovery and organizational learning.

Frontline Training Session 2

Purpose-Driven Storytelling, Self-Care, and Community-Driven Systems
March 26, 2026
Instructor: Sindy Bolaños-Sacoman

Sindy Bolaños-Sacoman brings extensive experience in data analysis, program evaluation and community engagement. Her work focuses on culturally responsive evaluation practices, community-based participatory research, program development, and data-driven storytelling. Her expertise helps organizations translate complex data to inform decision-making, communicate impact while elevating community voice and lived experience.

This session explored the role of storytelling as a tool to communicate program impact through both qualitative and quantitative community narratives and strengthen community-driven systems, supporting self-care, and communicating organizational impact. Participants examined the difference between deficit-based narratives and asset-based storytelling approaches while learning how data-driven stories can elevate community strengths, cultural knowledge, lived experience, and inform stakeholders and funders. The training also introduced Talking Circles as a culturally grounded approach to dialogue, reflection, and collective learning.

Participants engaged in reflection and discussion focused on how storytelling can support community-defined priorities while creating stronger connections among service providers, community members, and stakeholders.

Learning outcomes included:

- Distinguishing between deficit-based narratives and asset-based, purpose-driven storytelling approaches.
- Incorporating community voice and lived experience into communication and decision-making practices.
- Using qualitative and quantitative information to communicate impact and advance community-defined goals.

Frontline Training Session 3

Serving Individuals Experiencing Homelessness and Severe Mental Illness
April 9, 2026
Instructor: Jodie Jepson

Jodie Jepson brings extensive experience working at the intersection of behavioral health, homelessness response, and community-based care coordination. Her work has focused on supporting individuals experiencing severe mental illness while strengthening collaboration among healthcare providers, housing organizations, first responders, and community service agencies.

This session focused on strategies for supporting individuals experiencing homelessness and severe mental illness through coordinated, multidisciplinary approaches. Participants explored practical tools for identifying high-acuity individuals, understanding service utilization patterns, and developing collaborative intervention strategies that improve stability while reducing unnecessary emergency service utilization.
The training also examined housing stabilization strategies, behavioral health coordination, crisis response, and cross-sector partnerships designed to support individuals with complex behavioral health and housing needs. Attention was given to the challenges and opportunities facing rural and Tribal communities, where service systems and housing resources may be more limited.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding coordinated approaches for supporting individuals experiencing homelessness and severe mental illness.
- Identifying strategies for multidisciplinary collaboration across healthcare, behavioral health, housing, and public safety systems.

- Applying person-centered and culturally responsive approaches to improve client stability and service coordination.

Frontline Training Session 4
De-Escalation and Crisis Intervention Through a Culturally and Trauma-Informed Lens
April 23, 2026
Instructor: Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office

This session was delivered by members of the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office and community partners with expertise in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), behavioral health response, and trauma-informed crisis intervention. Drawing on real-world experience working with individuals experiencing behavioral health crises, homelessness, and housing instability, the instructors provided practical strategies for safely and effectively responding to high-stress situations while preserving dignity and promoting positive outcomes.

The training explored de-escalation as both a communication skill and a trauma-informed response framework. Participants examined how trauma, culture, and lived experience influence behavior during crisis situations and how these factors can affect interactions between service providers and individuals in distress. The session emphasized the importance of understanding behavior through a trauma-informed lens, recognizing that many crisis responses reflect survival adaptations rather than intentional resistance or noncompliance.

Participants learned practical techniques for establishing safety, building trust, and reducing escalation through active listening, emotional regulation, empathy, and culturally responsive communication. The training also highlighted the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation among providers, emphasizing how personal reactions, assumptions, and communication styles can influence the outcome of crisis interactions.

Learning outcomes included:
- Understanding how trauma and cultural experiences influence behavior, perception, and responses during crisis situations.
- Applying trauma-informed de-escalation techniques to support individuals experiencing emotional or behavioral distress.
- Utilizing active listening, empathy, and communication strategies that promote safety, dignity, and connection during crisis intervention.

Frontline Training Session 5
Multidisciplinary Teaming and Prioritizing Person-Centered Approaches
May 7, 2026
Instructor: William G. Wagner, PhD, LCSW

Dr. Bill Wagner is an independently licensed clinical social worker, psychotherapist, medical anthropologist, and Executive Director of Centro Sávila. For more than twenty-five years, he has worked alongside immigrants, refugees, and other vulnerable populations throughout New Mexico, supporting individuals and communities impacted by trauma, violence, behavioral health challenges, and systemic barriers to care. His work emphasizes community-defined solutions, cultural responsiveness, and the importance of elevating lived experience as a form of expertise.

This session focused on strengthening multidisciplinary collaboration while ensuring that services remain grounded in the priorities, goals, and voices of the individuals being served. Participants explored the opportunities and challenges associated with multidisciplinary team-based approaches and examined how systems, organizational structures, and professional roles can influence decision-making and service delivery.

The training emphasized person-centered and community-defined practices that support meaningful participation, shared decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving. Participants discussed strategies for balancing

organizational requirements with participant-identified goals while strengthening communication, accountability, and trust across disciplines. Through discussion and real-world examples, participants examined how trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches can improve collaboration among service providers while producing more responsive and equitable outcomes for individuals and families.

Learning outcomes included:

- Understanding key principles of person-centered and community-defined practice within multidisciplinary teams.
- Identifying how systems, roles, and power dynamics influence collaboration and service delivery.
- Applying strategies that strengthen communication, shared accountability, and participant voice within team-based settings.

Community Conversations

Each Frontline Provider Training session was followed by a facilitated Community Conversation designed to reinforce the learning objectives of the training. These discussions provided space for participants to reflect on how the concepts applied within their own organizations, share challenges from their communities, and collaborate with peers working across housing, behavioral health, and social service systems. The Community Conversations helped strengthen peer learning networks and encouraged cross-organizational collaboration among service providers working throughout New Mexico.

Frontline Provider Training Schedule

Training	Topic	Date	Instructor
Frontline Provider Training Session 1	Critical Incident Debrief and Crisis Response for Community Service Organizations	Mar 12, 2026	Amy Suman
Frontline Provider Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Mar 19, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Frontline Provider Training Session 2	Purpose-Driven Storytelling, Self-Care & Community-Driven Systems	Mar 26 , 2026	Sindy Bolaños-Sacoman
Frontline Provider Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Apr 2, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Frontline Provider Training Session 3	Serving Individuals Experiencing Homelessness and Severe Mental Illness	Apr 9, 2026	Jodie Jepson
Frontline Provider Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Apr 16, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Frontline Provider Training Session 4	De-Escalation & Crisis Intervention from a Culturally and Trauma-Informed Lens	Apr 23, 2026	BCSO
Frontline Provider Community Conversation	Community Discussion	Apr 30, 2026	Facilitated Discussion
Frontline Provider Training Session 5	Multidisciplinary Teaming & Prioritizing Person-Centered Approaches	May 7, 2026	Dr. William Wagner
Frontline Provider Community Conversation	Community Discussion	May 14, 2026	Facilitated Discussion

Frontline Participant Attendance and Engagement

The Frontline Service Provider Training Series launched on March 12, 2026, with 104 participants representing organizations serving communities throughout New Mexico. Attendance remained strong throughout the series, particularly during the core training sessions, reflecting the relevance of the topics and participants' commitment to strengthening their skills and knowledge. Community Conversations were offered as optional peer-learning opportunities and provided additional space for discussion, reflection, and collaboration among participants.

As with the Leadership Series, the most common reasons participants cited for absences were work

responsibilities, staffing demands, and personal or family health-related issues. Despite these challenges, participation remained consistent throughout the program and demonstrated strong engagement among New Mexico's housing and homelessness workforce.

Frontline Attendance

Date	Participants Attending	Attendance Rate
Mar 12, 2026	83	80%
***Mar 19, 2026**	48	46%
Mar 26, 2026	80	77%
***Apr 2, 2026**	39	38%
Apr 9, 2026	65	63%
***Apr 16, 2026**	29	28%
Apr 23, 2026	65	63%
***Apr 30, 2026**	20	19%
May 7, 2026	62	60%
***May 14, 2026**	29	28%

**Indicates Community Conversation. Community conversations are optional.*

Frontline Provider Outcomes

Methods

Matched pre- and post-survey responses were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to examine changes in participants' knowledge and confidence across five training learning objectives.

Analysis of Participant Outcomes

Paired pre and post-test data were analyzed for all five frontline provider academy sessions. While participant response rates demonstrated moderate session-to-session variability (ranging from 58% to 73%), evaluation findings indicate a robust, comprehensive increase in participant knowledge across every indicator. Statistically significant improvements were observed at the $p <. 001$ level across all domains, with the sole exception of the Working with Individuals with Severe Mental Illness, which achieved significance at the $p < .01$ level. Aggregate findings demonstrate that all evaluated outcomes exceeded the standard threshold for statistical significance ($p< .05$) indicating that the curriculum effectively enhanced both theoretical knowledge and self-reported application confidence among participants. These highly significant data validate the efficacy of the Office of Housing's capacity-building initiative. By demonstrably elevating provider competency and confidence, the frontline provider academy serves as an empirically backed mechanism for bolstering statewide system capacity and improving service delivery to populations experiencing homelessness. The following table provides a comprehensive summary of knowledge and confidence metrics across the Frontline Provider Academy modules.

Pre-and Post-Training Changes in Knowledge and Confidence				
Outcomes	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Mean Change	p-value
Crititcal Incident Debrief for Frontline Providers (N=76)				
Outcomes	**Pre Mean**	**Post Mean**	**Mean Change**	**p-value**
Identifying critical incidents	3.31	4.29	0.99	**p<.001**
Evaluating emotional responses to critical incidents	3.87	4.25	0.39	**p<.001**
Implementing trauma-informed strategies for team resilience	3.77	4.31	0.53	**p<.001**
Confidence in applying the 7-Phase critical incident model	2.85	4.19	1.33	**p<.001**
Implementing prevention, communication, and mitigation strategies	3.55	4.09	0.55	**p<.001**
Purpose -Driven Storytelling, Self-Care & Community-Driven Systems (N=61)				
Distinguishing between deficit & asset-based storytelling	3.13	4.44	1.31	**p<.001**
Storytelling for community-defined purpose	3.52	4.3	0.84	**p<.001**
Talking Circle principles	2.72	4.26	1.54	**p<.001**
Applying Talking Circle principles	2.8	4.34	1.51	**p<.001**
Organizational narrative and community context	3.21	4.21	1	**p<.001**
Working with Individuals with Severe Mental Illness (N=73)				
Understanding community-grounded principles	3.12	4.27	1.15	**p<.01**
Distiguish between screening and assessment to identify appropriate levels of care	3.33	4.25	0.92	**p<.01**
Knowledge of effective evidence-based practices	3.19	4.14	0.95	**p<.01**
Ability to coordinate care across diverse geographic contexts	3.41	4.22	0.81	**p<.01**
Ability to identify statewide resources	3.49	4.19	0.7	**p<.01**
De-Escalation & Crisis Intervention from a Culturally and Trauma-Informed Lens (N=72)				
Knowledge of how trauma affects brain function	3.4	4.28	0.88	**p<.001**
Ability to identify how cultural contect influences response during crisis	3.65	4.4	0.75	**p<.001**
Application of MORE PIES and reflective listening	3.04	4.24	1.19	**p<.001**
Application of grounding strategies for self-regulation	3.79	4.46	0.67	**p<.001**
Ability to identify when disengagement or additional support is necessary	3.76	4.46	0.69	**p<.001**
Multidisciplinary Teaming & Prioritizing Person-Centered Approaches (N= 73)				
Knowledge of key principles of person-centered practice	3.46	4.38	0.92	**p<0.001**
Ability to identify how power dynamics influence decision-making	3.58	4.39	0.81	**p<0.001**
Application of trauma-informed and strength-based principles in team decision-making	3.82	4.43	0.61	**p<0.001**
Use of communication technicques to support shared	3.63	4.44	0.82	**p<0.001**
Ability to distinguish between organizational requirements and participant-identified goals	3.65	4.36	0.71	**p<0.001**

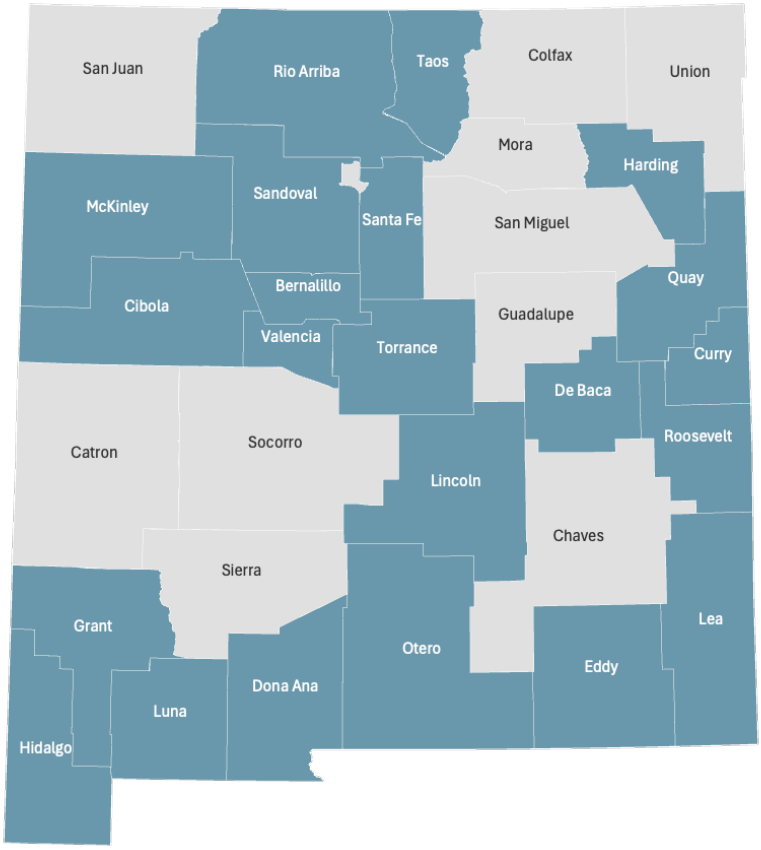
Geographic Representation

Participants across both the Leadership Training Series and Frontline Service Provider Training Series represent organizations serving communities in ***30 of New Mexico's 33 counties***.

In addition to county-level representation, numerous participants indicated that their organizations provide services statewide, extending the reach of the initiative to communities across New Mexico. Participants represented a diverse range of housing, homelessness, behavioral health, healthcare, public safety, workforce development, and community-based organizations.

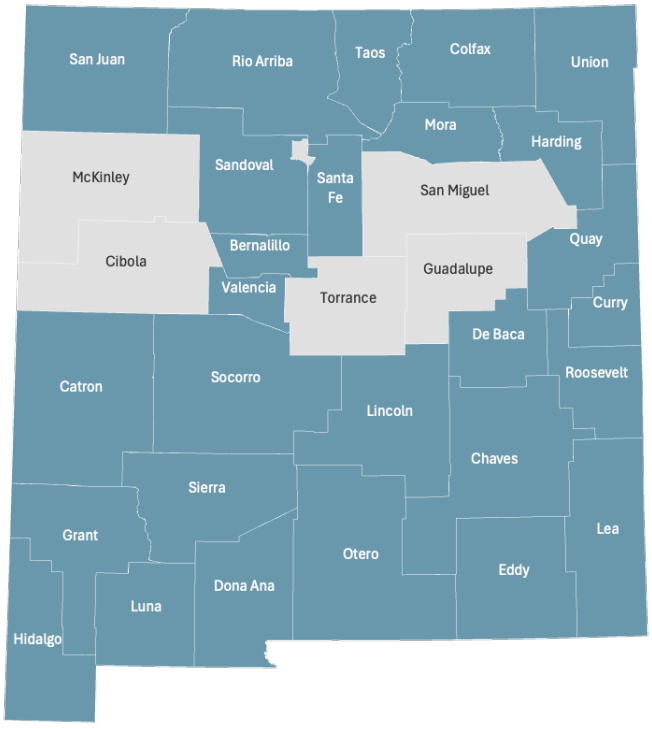
This broad geographic representation reflects the initiative's commitment to serving both metropolitan areas and rural, frontier, and Tribal communities, where access to professional development opportunities and housing-related resources may be more limited. By utilizing a virtual delivery model, the program was able to engage participants from across the state and strengthen connections among professionals working to address housing instability and homelessness in diverse community settings.

22 NM Counties Represented in Leadership Training



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27 NM Counties Represented in Provider Training



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Participant Support and Stipends

To support participation and reduce barriers to professional development, a $500.00 stipend was made available to eligible participants who met attendance and program requirements. Participants receiving the stipend attended, or completed make-up modules for, all five sessions and community conversations. A total of 104 stipends were processed through the initiative, including 32 (63%) Leadership Training Series participants and 72 (69%) Frontline Service Provider Training Series participants.

The stipend component helped support sustained engagement throughout both training series and was frequently identified by participants as an important factor in their ability to participate. This finding is consistent with the capacity survey conducted in July 2025 by the Office of Housing, which identified limited access to funding for continuing education as a barrier for the housing and homelessness workforce. Given the demanding nature of participants' professional responsibilities and the voluntary nature of the training, the completion rates achieved across both cohorts reflect strong engagement and commitment to professional development among New Mexico's housing and homelessness workforce.

Program Outcomes and Participant Experience

Participant feedback indicates that both the Leadership Training Series and Frontline Service Provider Training Series provided meaningful professional development opportunities for individuals working to address housing instability and homelessness throughout New Mexico. Participants consistently reported that the training content was relevant to their daily work, applicable to real-world challenges, and valuable in strengthening both individual skills and organizational capacity.

SBS Evaluation administered a post-training participant survey completed by 28 participants in the Leadership Academy and 75 participants in the Frontline Provider Academy. Across all five sessions, both leadership and provider training surveys reflected strong satisfaction and perceived relevance. Leadership participants reported high agreement that training content applied to their professional roles (avg 89%) and that they gained applicable new skills (avg 95%), though ratings for cultural grounding were notably more variable, dipping to 64% and 71% in sessions 4 and 5. Frontline Provider survey results were consistently high across all metrics and sessions, with high agreement that the training content applied to their professional role (avg 95%) and they gained new skills that could be applied in their professional role (avg 95%), with cultural grounding scores notably stronger (avg 93%) compared to the leadership cohort. Overall, both groups affirmed the training's practical applicability, with participant respondents demonstrating slightly more uniform satisfaction throughout the series. The table below provides a breakdown of results per session.

Leadership Training Survey	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5
The training content directly applied to my professional role	97%	89%	92%	80%	89%
This session has prepared me to apply the concepts to my work	86%	85%	100%	84%	93%
I learned one or more new skills I can apply in my professional role	94%	89%	98%	92%	100%
The training was culturally grounded	94%	85%	88%	64%	71%
Participant Training Survey	**Session 1**	**Session 2**	**Session 3**	**Session 4**	**Session 5**
The training content directly applied to my professional role	93%	98%	92%	97%	94%
This session has prepared me to apply the concepts to my work	93%	97%	88%	97%	96%
I learned one or more new skills I can apply in my professional role	96%	98%	92%	97%	93%
The training was culturally grounded	89%	98%	86%	97%	96%

CNM Ingenuity administered an end-of-program evaluation, which was completed by 17 Leadership participants and 53 Frontline participants, providing valuable feedback regarding participant experience, program effectiveness, and future workforce development needs.

Leadership and Frontline Provider Training Series participants highlighted the practical nature of the training and the opportunity to learn from subject matter experts with extensive experience working within New Mexico's housing, behavioral health, nonprofit, and public service systems. Participants reported value in sessions focused on sustainable funding strategies, data storytelling, and critical incident response. Many noted that the training helped them better understand how to navigate complex service systems while strengthening their ability to support staff, communicate organizational impact, and develop sustainable approaches to service delivery.

Participants also emphasized the value of connecting with peers from organizations across the state. The combination of formal instruction and facilitated Community Conversations created opportunities for leaders to share challenges, exchange ideas, and build relationships with colleagues working in similar service environments. For many participants, these networking opportunities were viewed as equally valuable as the training content itself.

Feedback from Frontline Service Provider participants reflected similarly strong outcomes. Participants consistently reported that the training increased their confidence in working with individuals experiencing housing instability, homelessness, mental health challenges, and crisis situations. Sessions focused on de-escalation techniques, severe mental illness, multidisciplinary teaming, and critical incident response were identified as particularly impactful due to their direct applicability to frontline service delivery.

Across both academies, participants expressed appreciation for the accessibility of the virtual training format. The ability to participate remotely allowed individuals from rural, frontier, and Tribal communities to engage in professional development opportunities that may otherwise have been difficult to access. Participants also reported feeling supported throughout the program and indicated strong interest in future training opportunities focused on housing stability, homelessness response, leadership development, and community-centered service delivery.

Overall, participant feedback demonstrates that the academies successfully strengthened workforce knowledge, expanded professional networks, and provided practical tools that participants can apply within their organizations and communities.

Expertise That Strengthens the Work

The training series was strengthened by the partnership of a lived experience expert whose review of the Leadership Academy brought the work closer to the people it is meant to serve. Her contribution was not symbolic and it was not limited to personal testimony. As a young mother who has experienced homelessness, she brought expertise formed through lived reality, careful observation, and a clear understanding of how public systems, service providers, and professional relationships can affect young people and families during moments of instability.

That expertise helped assess whether the training was relevant in practice, not only strong in concept. Her contributions were also grounded in substantial applied experience developed through the Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement grant. Since August 2025, she has contributed more than 400 hours to curriculum development for frontline providers and has completed over 30 hours of national and local training review, evaluation, and recommendations. This work reflects expertise that extends beyond lived experience alone. It shows how her knowledge has been applied through structured curriculum development, training analysis, and direct feedback on whether materials are accessible, respectful, and useful to the people and providers they are intended to support. She recognized the value of presenters who communicated with sincerity and made the material easier to understand.

Her review also made clear that relevance depends on design. Several trainings addressed important topics, but length, virtual delivery, and lack of visual support sometimes made the content harder to follow. One session on funding systems was recognized as important, while also being difficult to follow and stay engaged with because of its length. Another training on data storytelling was harder to understand, and a separate session would have been stronger with a slideshow or other visual structure. These observations were not surface-level preferences. They were practical guidance about how

professional learning must be built if it is intended to include people with lived experience, young parents, frontline staff, and community partners in a meaningful way.

Her own words captured this clearly. “Make it shorter. As a youth who is also a mom, it is hard to participate, focus, and do all other things. Having to pause and come back can be overwhelming.” That statement carries an important lesson for leaders. Participation is not created by invitation alone. It requires formats that respect people’s time, attention, responsibilities, and capacity to engage.

Her feedback also clarified why future trainings should address counseling, therapy, trust-building, and professional communication. For young people experiencing homelessness, service delivery is shaped by more than eligibility rules, referrals, and available resources. It is shaped by whether providers communicate with respect, respond without judgment, and follow through consistently. Words, expressions, tone, and follow-through can either reinforce dignity or deepen disconnection. Her feedback made clear that the human side of service delivery is not separate from the technical work. It is part of what makes the technical work effective.

This partnership made the Leadership Academy training series review stronger because it brought honesty into the process. It affirmed what worked, identified where barriers remained, and clarified what future trainings must consider. Most importantly, it demonstrated why lived experience expertise must be built into systems work from the beginning. When people with lived experience help shape training, leadership, and service design, the work becomes more grounded, more accessible, and more accountable to the communities it is intended to serve.

Workforce Development Impact

The New Mexico Housing and Homelessness Workforce Training Initiative was designed to strengthen the workforce responsible for supporting individuals and families experiencing housing instability and homelessness throughout New Mexico. Through the combined Leadership Training Series and Frontline Service Provider Training Series, the program provided professional development opportunities to 155 participants representing organizations serving communities across New Mexico.

The initiative successfully reached organizations operating in urban, rural, frontier, and Tribal communities, with participants representing services provided in 30 of New Mexico’s 33 counties. This statewide reach reflects the program’s commitment to expanding access to workforce development opportunities for professionals regardless of geographic location. Participants represented housing providers, homelessness service organizations, behavioral health agencies, healthcare systems, workforce development organizations, public safety agencies, local governments, Tribal organizations, and community-based nonprofits.

Beyond the delivery of individual training sessions, the program helped foster stronger connections among service providers working within housing, behavioral health, public health, education, workforce development, and community support systems. Collectively, the initiative delivered ten workforce training sessions and ten facilitated Community Conversations designed to strengthen both individual competencies and cross-sector collaboration. Community Conversations provided dedicated opportunities for participants to engage with peers, discuss challenges facing their communities, and identify opportunities for collaboration across organizations and sectors.

Participant feedback suggests the training increased knowledge and confidence in several key areas, including trauma-informed service delivery, crisis response, de-escalation techniques, leadership practices, mental health awareness, multidisciplinary collaboration, and systems-level approaches to addressing housing instability. Participants consistently reported that the skills and strategies presented during the training could be immediately applied within their professional roles.

The virtual delivery model further contributed to program impact by reducing geographic barriers and allowing participants from across New Mexico to engage in high-quality professional development without the time and

financial burdens often associated with travel. This approach supported participation from organizations with limited training resources while helping to build a more connected statewide network of housing and homelessness service professionals.

Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate the value of investing in workforce development as part of a comprehensive strategy to address housing instability and homelessness. Demand for both training series exceeded available capacity, demonstrating strong statewide interest in professional development opportunities focused on housing stability, homelessness response, and community-centered service delivery. By strengthening the skills, knowledge, and connections of the professionals serving New Mexico's communities, the initiative contributes to a more coordinated and resilient service system capable of responding to the complex needs of individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Several important lessons emerged throughout the implementation of the Leadership Training Series and Frontline Service Provider Training Series. Participant, instructor, and program team feedback consistently demonstrated strong support for the overall structure and objectives of the trainings and initiative while also identifying opportunities to strengthen future cohorts.

One of the most significant findings was the effectiveness of virtual delivery in supporting statewide participation. Participants frequently cited accessibility and flexibility as major benefits of the program, particularly for individuals serving rural and frontier communities. At the same time, many participants expressed interest in incorporating limited in-person or hybrid opportunities to further strengthen networking, collaboration, and peer learning.

Participants and instructors alike emphasized the importance of interactive learning experiences. While the instructional content was highly valued, feedback suggested that additional time dedicated to discussion, reflection, case studies, and peer engagement would further enhance the learning experience. Community Conversations were consistently identified as a valuable component of the program and should remain a core element of future offerings.

The program also reinforced the importance of advance planning and curriculum development. Additional lead time would support instructor recruitment, curriculum alignment, approval processes, and learning management system development. Early recruitment of instructors would allow time to develop training materials and thus facilitate the development of learning objectives for the evaluator. Earlier collaboration between instructors, instructional designers, and project partners would further strengthen learning outcomes and ensure consistency across training experiences. Participant feedback also identified opportunities to further streamline the learner experience through enhancements to the learning management system navigation, onboarding materials, and completion tracking processes.

The interval between training sessions could be lengthened, giving participants more time between training sessions. providing more time in between training sessions for the participants. Although extremely beneficial, the weekly training sessions were demanding for a workforce already facing staffing shortages and burnout. On average, training sessions were 3 hours in length for both the Leadership Academy and the Frontline Provider Academy, taking a considerable amount of time out of the workday. For some, the weekly schedule allowed for consistency and early completion of the training series; for others, weekly attendance was challenging. Make-up sessions were added as one method to address this challenge.

Future workforce development efforts should continue to prioritize topics identified by participants and instructors as critical to addressing housing instability and homelessness. These areas include trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, severe mental illness, housing systems navigation, policy and systems change, workforce wellbeing, multidisciplinary collaboration, implementation of data-driven interventions and program

modification, grant writing, and strategies for serving highly vulnerable populations. Participants also expressed interest in trainings that are culturally grounded and that incorporate additional perspectives from Tribal communities, rural providers, and individuals with lived experience.

The strong participation, positive feedback, and statewide engagement generated through this initiative demonstrate a continued need for accessible professional development opportunities for New Mexico's housing and homelessness workforce. Future investments in this work have the potential to further strengthen service delivery systems, improve collaboration among providers, and support the professionals working daily to address some of the state's most complex community challenges.

Community Conversations

IN THIS SECTION

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What We Heard
Thematic Analysis
New Mexico Cultural and Indigenous Perspectives of Wisdom Sharing
Implications for Workforce Development, Policy, and Systems Change

Introduction

Strengthening New Mexico's housing, homelessness, behavioral health, and human services workforce requires more than technical training alone. Sustainable workforce development depends upon creating opportunities for practitioners to reflect collectively, share lived expertise, strengthen professional identity, and build relationships across organizational, disciplinary, and geographic boundaries. The Leadership and Frontline Provider Academy Community Conversations were designed to serve this purpose by creating structured opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and collaborative learning among professionals serving individuals and families experiencing housing instability, homelessness, behavioral health challenges, substance use disorders, domestic violence, human trafficking, and related social determinants of health.

Across ten Community Conversations, participants represented urban, rural, frontier, nonprofit, government, faith-based, peer-led, and healthcare organizations throughout New Mexico. Discussions explored leadership development, critical incident debriefing, storytelling, self-care, severe mental illness, de-escalation, multidisciplinary teaming, financial stewardship, workforce sustainability, and systems collaboration. Collectively, these conversations created a rich qualitative dataset documenting how frontline practitioners and leaders experience, understand, and respond to complex social challenges.

Findings demonstrate that workforce capacity extends beyond technical knowledge and organizational infrastructure. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of relationships, trust, cultural humility, lived expertise, collaborative problem-solving, sustainability, and community connection. These findings suggest that effective workforce development requires simultaneous investment in professional competencies, organizational supports, and relational infrastructures that allow practitioners to learn from one another and remain connected to the values that brought them into helping professions.

What We Heard

System Capacity

Across all ten conversations, participants consistently described operating within systems characterized by complexity, fragmentation, and resource constraints. Discussions frequently centered on workforce shortages, high caseloads, staff turnover, funding instability, communication breakdowns, and limitations in housing and behavioral health infrastructure.

However, participants rarely framed these challenges as insurmountable barriers. Instead, discussions focused on adaptation, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. Participants described building informal networks across agencies, creating multidisciplinary partnerships, and developing local solutions when formal systems were insufficient.

A notable finding was the distinction participants made between formal infrastructure and relational infrastructure. While many participants acknowledged limitations in staffing, funding, technology, and organizational resources, they repeatedly emphasized that relationships often compensated for these gaps. Participants described relying on trusted colleagues, community partners, peer networks, and cross-agency collaborations to coordinate services, share information, and respond to crises.

Participants also demonstrated strong systems awareness. Discussions frequently reflected understanding of how housing, behavioral health, criminal justice, healthcare, education, and social service systems intersect and influence one another. This systems orientation suggests a workforce capable of viewing challenges through ecological and structural lenses rather than attributing problems solely to individual circumstances.

Service Access

Service access emerged as a significant concern across nearly every conversation. Participants described numerous barriers affecting individuals and families seeking housing, behavioral health treatment, recovery supports, transportation, identification documents, benefits, and long-term stabilization services.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that access barriers rarely occur in isolation. Rather, individuals often experience multiple, interconnected challenges that require coordinated responses. Housing instability, behavioral health conditions, substance use disorders, transportation limitations, documentation barriers, and systemic discrimination were frequently described as mutually reinforcing obstacles.

A consistent finding involved the importance of systems navigation. Participants described extensive efforts to help individuals understand eligibility requirements, complete applications, secure documentation, access services, and navigate complex bureaucratic processes. These discussions reflected substantial navigational expertise among workforce participants and highlighted the critical role providers play in bridging individuals to services.

Trust-building also emerged as an important access strategy. Participants repeatedly emphasized that individuals are more likely to engage with services when they experience respect, consistency, authenticity, and emotional safety. Many participants described outreach and engagement as long-term relational processes rather than single encounters.

Service Quality

Service quality produced some of the most extensive coding across the dataset. Participants consistently described high-quality practice as relational, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and person-centered.

Listening emerged as one of the most frequently discussed practice skills. Participants repeatedly described active listening, reflective communication, validation, and emotional attunement as essential components of effective intervention. Providers emphasized the importance of slowing down interactions, avoiding assumptions, suspending judgment, and creating opportunities for individuals to tell their stories.

Trauma-informed approaches appeared throughout nearly every conversation. Participants discussed emotional safety, empowerment, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and cultural responsiveness as foundational principles guiding their work. These concepts emerged not only within behavioral health discussions but also within conversations related to housing navigation, crisis intervention, leadership, and financial stewardship.

Participants also emphasized person-centered approaches centering dignity and human worth as indicators of service quality. Effective practice was frequently described as helping individuals feel seen, heard, respected, and valued. These findings suggest that participants conceptualize service quality not merely in terms of outcomes or compliance measures, but also in terms of relational experience and connection.

Workforce Development

Workforce development emerged as one of the most robust coding categories across all conversations. Participants consistently discussed professional growth, skill development, reflective practice, supervision, peer learning, and identity formation.

Importantly, participants did not define workforce development solely as acquiring technical knowledge. Rather, discussions emphasized the development of relational competencies, emotional intelligence, cultural humility, communication skills, leadership capacity, and self-awareness.

Many participants described learning as a collective process. Community Conversations were frequently referenced as opportunities to exchange ideas, receive feedback on approaches, and learn from peers across

organizations and disciplines. These findings provide strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of Communities of Practice as a workforce development strategy.

Participants also discussed the importance of mentorship, supervision, and experiential learning. Professional growth was often described as occurring through relationships and reflection rather than formal instruction alone.

Stabilization Outcomes

Participants consistently framed stabilization as a multidimensional process extending beyond housing placement or crisis resolution. Discussions emphasized emotional safety, belonging, recovery, self-determination, social connection, family reunification, and community integration.

Participants described stabilization as occurring when individuals experience increased trust, safety, connection, hope, and agency. Housing was viewed as essential but insufficient on its own. Stabilization was understood as requiring coordinated support across multiple domains of life.

Hope emerged as a particularly important construct. Participants repeatedly described their role as helping individuals envision possibilities beyond their current circumstances. Recovery-oriented language appeared frequently across conversations involving homelessness, addiction, behavioral health, incarceration, and trauma.

Thematic Analysis

Theme One: Relational Infrastructure Functions as the Primary Workforce and Systems Resource

Across all ten Community Conversations, relationships emerged as the single most consistent and influential factor shaping workforce effectiveness, service delivery, organizational sustainability, and systems responsiveness. Participants repeatedly described relationships as endemic to both successful work and a vital infrastructure for strong service systems. Trust, connection, reciprocity, mentorship, collaboration, and shared accountability were discussed as foundational sources of support that enable providers to navigate complexity, overcome resource limitations, and sustain meaningful work in challenging environments.

Participants frequently uplifted relationships as the means through which information is exchanged, resources are accessed, crises are managed, referrals are coordinated, and barriers are overcome. In many instances, participants acknowledged that formal systems, policies, and procedures alone were insufficient to address the realities of housing instability, behavioral health crises, and community need. Instead, providers often relied upon trusted colleagues, community partners, peer networks, and informal relationships to create pathways for support and intervention.

The importance of relational infrastructure was particularly evident in discussions regarding multidisciplinary collaboration. Participants consistently described successful outcomes as emerging through partnerships among housing providers, behavioral health professionals, healthcare systems, law enforcement, peer support specialists, faith-based organizations, Tribal entities, and community-based programs. These collaborations were often characterized by mutual trust, ongoing communication, and shared commitment to client wellbeing.

Participants also emphasized the role of relationships in workforce development. Mentorship, peer consultation, supervision, and collaborative learning were frequently identified as critical sources of professional growth. Many participants described learning from formal instruction, but equally valued conversations with colleagues, shared problem-solving, and observation of experienced practitioners. Community Conversations themselves functioned as spaces where relationships were formed and strengthened, allowing participants to exchange ideas, normalize challenges, and develop a sense of professional community.

Importantly, relational infrastructure extended beyond professional relationships. Participants repeatedly emphasized the centrality of relationships with clients, families, and communities. Effective service delivery was

consistently described as reliant on trust, authenticity, consistency, and emotional safety. Participants noted that individuals experiencing homelessness, trauma, behavioral health challenges, and substance use disorders often engage with services only after relationships have been established and trust has been earned over time.

These findings suggest that workforce development and systems improvement efforts must recognize relationships as a form of infrastructure deserving intentional investment. While funding, staffing, technology, and policy remain essential, the data indicate that relationships frequently determine whether systems succeed in practice. Relational infrastructure enables adaptation, strengthens workforce resilience, facilitates collaboration, and creates the conditions necessary for both organizational effectiveness and community wellbeing.

Theme Two: Communities of Practice Create Conditions for Learning, Belonging, Innovation, and Workforce Retention

A second major finding centered on the role of Communities of Practice as mechanisms for workforce development, professional identity formation, and collective problem-solving. Across all ten Community Conversations, participants consistently demonstrated the core characteristics associated with Communities of Practice, including mutual engagement, shared purpose, collaborative learning, reflective dialogue, and knowledge exchange.

Participants frequently described the value of learning from peers who faced similar challenges in different organizational and geographic contexts. Community Conversations created opportunities for participants to compare approaches, share implementation strategies, discuss barriers, exchange resources, and explore practical solutions to complex workforce issues. Rather than functioning as traditional training environments characterized by one-directional knowledge transfer, the conversations fostered reciprocal learning and collective meaning-making.

Many participants described feelings of validation and normalization through participation in the conversations. Providers often expressed relief upon discovering that others faced similar workforce shortages, burnout concerns, funding challenges, and implementation barriers. These interactions appeared to reduce professional isolation while strengthening participants' sense of belonging within a broader statewide workforce community.

The conversations also facilitated the exchange of participants’ inherent knowledge, or practice wisdom that is often difficult to capture through formal curricula. Participants shared experiential insights regarding crisis intervention, engagement strategies, relationship-building, supervision approaches, systems navigation, advocacy, and self-care. This exchange of practical knowledge frequently occurred through storytelling, reflection, and dialogue rather than direct instruction.

Communities of Practice also appeared to support innovation. Participants routinely built upon one another's ideas, adapting strategies across organizational contexts and generating new approaches through collaborative discussion. In several conversations, participants described plans to implement practices learned from peers, suggesting that Communities of Practice may accelerate the proliferation of promising practices throughout workforce systems.

An equally important finding involved the role of Communities of Practice in fostering professional identity and workforce retention. Participants consistently described the conversations as opportunities to reconnect with their purpose, values, and commitment to community service. Discussions often reinforced participants' sense of belonging to a larger movement dedicated to housing stability, recovery, healing, and social justice.

The findings indicate that Communities of Practice function as workforce development interventions that strengthen relationships, increase knowledge sharing, foster innovation, support emotional wellbeing, and contribute to professional retention. As workforce shortages continue to affect housing and homelessness systems nationally, Communities of Practice may represent an important strategy for building sustainable workforce capacity.

Theme Three: Workforce Sustainability Depends on Emotional Sustainability

Workforce sustainability emerged as one of the most prominent concerns across all ten Community Conversations. Participants consistently described the emotional demands associated with serving individuals experiencing homelessness, behavioral health challenges, substance use disorders, trauma, domestic violence, human trafficking, and severe mental illness. Emotional labor, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, grief, and chronic stress appeared across virtually every discussion regardless of topic area.

Participants frequently described balancing high caseloads, limited resources, organizational demands, and complex client needs while simultaneously attempting to maintain personal wellbeing. Many providers discussed the emotional impact of witnessing suffering, navigating systemic barriers, responding to crises, and supporting individuals facing significant adversity. These experiences often extended beyond work hours, affecting participants' personal lives, relationships, and sense of wellbeing.

Despite these challenges, participants consistently identified factors that contributed to resilience and sustainability. Peer support emerged as one of the strongest protective factors. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of having trusted colleagues with whom they could process experiences, seek advice, share frustrations, and celebrate successes. These relationships appeared to serve both practical and emotional functions within workforce settings.

Reflective practice also emerged as an important mechanism for emotional sustainability. Participants described the value of supervision, debriefing, storytelling, journaling, creative expression, and structured reflection as opportunities to process experiences and maintain perspective. Several participants discussed the importance of self-awareness and emotional regulation, particularly when responding to crises or working with highly vulnerable populations.

Spirituality, culture, family, and community connection were also frequently identified as sources of resilience. Participants described drawing strength from cultural traditions, faith communities, family relationships, nature, creative practices, and opportunities to contribute to community wellbeing. These findings align strongly with Community Cultural Wealth frameworks, suggesting that resilience is often rooted in cultural and relational resources rather than individual coping strategies alone.

Importantly, participants rarely framed self-care as an individual responsibility disconnected from organizational conditions. Instead, discussions emphasized the role of organizations, supervisors, peers, and systems in creating environments that support workforce wellbeing. Participants advocated for reflective supervision, manageable workloads, supportive leadership, opportunities for professional growth, and organizational cultures that recognize the emotional realities of helping professions.

The findings indicate that workforce sustainability cannot be fully understood through staffing levels, compensation, or recruitment alone. Emotional sustainability emerged as a critical determinant of workforce retention, effectiveness, and long-term capacity. Efforts to strengthen the housing and homelessness workforce must therefore address both structural workforce needs and the emotional realities of community-based practice.

Theme Four: Community Cultural Wealth Operates as Both a Workforce Asset and an Intervention Strategy

One of the most significant findings across the qualitative analysis was the pervasive presence of community cultural wealth throughout participant narratives. Across all conversations, participants demonstrated extensive cultural, relational, experiential, and community-based assets that informed how they engaged clients, supported colleagues, navigated systems, and approached leadership.

Social Capital emerged consistently through discussions of collaborative partnerships, mentorship relationships, community networks, peer support systems, and cross-sector alliances. Participants frequently relied upon these

networks to access resources, coordinate care, solve problems, and strengthen organizational capacity. These relationships often functioned as critical assets in environments characterized by limited formal resources.

Navigational Capital was evident in participants' sophisticated understanding of complex service systems. Providers demonstrated extensive expertise in helping individuals access housing, healthcare, behavioral health services, legal assistance, education, employment opportunities, and recovery supports. Participants frequently described serving as guides who help individuals navigate fragmented and often overwhelming systems.

Aspirational Capital emerged through stories of recovery, resilience, educational attainment, leadership development, and long-term visions for personal and community transformation. Participants consistently emphasized hope, possibility, and future orientation, even while acknowledging significant systemic challenges. Many participants described supporting individuals in imagining lives beyond homelessness, addiction, incarceration, or crisis.

Linguistic Capital appeared through storytelling, bilingual communication, cultural translation, and narrative-sharing. Participants frequently described storytelling as a tool for healing, advocacy, education, and relationship-building. Across multiple conversations, narrative was used to humanize experiences, challenge stereotypes, and communicate complex realities in ways that fostered understanding and empathy.

Resistant Capital emerged through discussions of advocacy, systems change, policy engagement, and efforts to challenge stigma and discrimination. Participants routinely described confronting deficit-based narratives regarding homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and poverty. Many participants viewed advocacy as an essential component of their professional roles.

Familial and Community Capital appeared through discussions of kinship networks, caregiving relationships, intergenerational support, cultural traditions, and collective responsibility. Participants frequently emphasized the importance of family, community, and belonging as sources of resilience and healing.

These findings align closely with Critical Trauma Theory and Riotous Research, which identified multiple forms of cultural wealth operating within New Mexico communities, including Native Capital, Native Resiliency, Ganas, Spiritual Capital, Ethnic Consciousness Wealth, and Perseverant Wealth (Nelson, 2022). Participants demonstrated many of these forms of capital through their narratives of survival, service, leadership, advocacy, and community commitment.

Importantly, community cultural wealth functioned not only as an individual asset but also as an intervention strategy. Participants leveraged cultural knowledge, lived expertise, relationships, storytelling, and community connections to engage clients, strengthen organizations, and improve systems. These findings suggest that effective workforce development should intentionally recognize, cultivate, and build upon existing community assets rather than relying exclusively on externally developed expertise.

The analysis ultimately demonstrates that community cultural wealth is already deeply embedded within New Mexico's housing and homelessness workforce. Recognizing and strengthening these assets represents an important opportunity for advancing workforce effectiveness, community engagement, and systems transformation.

Theme Five: Adaptive Leadership Emerges Through Collective Responsibility, Cultural Humility, and Shared Accountability

Across all ten Community Conversations, participants consistently described leadership as a relational and collective process rather than a positional or hierarchical function. Although participants occupied a range of roles including executive leadership, program management, case management, peer support, outreach, behavioral health, housing navigation, supervision, and direct service positions, discussions revealed a remarkably consistent understanding of leadership as a practice grounded in responsibility to community, service to others, and commitment to shared wellbeing.

Participants rarely framed leadership in terms of authority, control, or organizational rank. Instead, leadership was described through actions such as listening, mentoring, advocating, convening stakeholders, supporting colleagues, building trust, sharing knowledge, and helping others navigate uncertainty. Participants repeatedly emphasized that effective leadership requires humility, self-awareness, adaptability, and a willingness to learn from both colleagues and community members.

Within the Leadership Academy conversations, participants frequently reflected on the challenges of leading within environments characterized by funding instability, workforce shortages, changing policy priorities, and growing community need. Rather than focusing on technical management alone, participants described leadership as a balancing act between organizational demands and human needs. Leaders discussed the importance of maintaining mission alignment while responding to crises, supporting staff wellbeing while meeting performance expectations, and navigating competing stakeholder interests without losing sight of community impact.

Within the Frontline Provider Academy conversations, participants demonstrated leadership in ways that extended beyond formal supervisory roles. Outreach workers, peer support specialists, case managers, and direct service providers frequently described taking initiative, mentoring newer staff, coordinating care across systems, advocating for clients, and modeling trauma-informed practice. These findings suggest that leadership is broadly distributed throughout the workforce rather than concentrated within formal administrative positions.

A particularly important finding involved participants' emphasis on collective responsibility. Participants consistently described leadership as a shared endeavor requiring collaboration, mutual support, and collective problem-solving. Many discussions focused on the importance of multidisciplinary teams, coalition-building, peer consultation, and cross-sector partnerships. Rather than viewing leadership as an individual accomplishment, participants framed success as dependent upon the strength of relationships and the willingness of people to work together toward common goals.

Leadership discussions also revealed substantial evidence of cultural humility. Participants frequently reflected on the need to remain open to diverse perspectives, challenge personal assumptions, learn from lived expertise, and recognize the limits of their own knowledge. Conversations involving de-escalation, severe mental illness, storytelling, and multidisciplinary teaming consistently emphasized curiosity, listening, and reflective practice as leadership competencies.

Notably, participants often linked leadership to healing. Leaders were described as individuals who create psychological safety, facilitate belonging, support workforce wellbeing, and cultivate environments where people feel valued and respected. These findings suggest that leadership within housing and homelessness systems functions not only as an administrative responsibility but also as a relational and healing-centered practice.

These findings indicate that adaptive leadership within New Mexico's housing and homelessness workforce is characterized by collective responsibility, relational accountability, cultural humility, shared learning, and commitment to community wellbeing. Leadership emerges not primarily through authority, but through the capacity to build trust, foster collaboration, navigate complexity, and support collective resilience.

Theme Six: Human-Centered Systems Change Requires Both Structural Transformation and Relational Transformation

The most comprehensive theme emerging from the qualitative analysis involved participants' understanding of systems change. Across all ten Community Conversations, participants demonstrated sophisticated awareness of the structural factors shaping homelessness, behavioral health outcomes, workforce capacity, and housing stability. At the same time, participants consistently emphasized that structural solutions alone are insufficient unless accompanied by relational and cultural transformation.

Participants frequently discussed systemic challenges including housing shortages, workforce shortages, fragmented service systems, inadequate behavioral health infrastructure, funding instability, transportation barriers, bureaucratic complexity, and inequitable access to resources. These discussions reflected a strong understanding of homelessness and behavioral health as structural issues rather than individual failures.

However, participants also consistently challenged approaches that focus exclusively on systems, policies, or programs while overlooking the human experience of those navigating these systems. Participants repeatedly emphasized that people experiencing homelessness, mental illness, substance use disorders, incarceration, trauma, and poverty often encounter systems that are difficult to navigate, emotionally overwhelming, and disconnected from their lived realities. As a result, participants described systems change as requiring both structural and relational transformation.

Structural transformation was reflected in discussions regarding affordable housing development, workforce investment, integrated behavioral health services, coordinated entry improvements, policy reform, data-informed planning, sustainable funding models, and expanded access to care. Participants frequently advocated for changes at organizational, local, regional, and statewide levels to address persistent barriers affecting individuals and families.

Participants also consistently emphasized relational transformation. Providers described the need for systems that are more compassionate, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and grounded in dignity. Participants discussed the importance of creating environments where individuals feel welcomed, respected, believed, and valued. They described how trust, empathy, consistency, and authentic engagement often determine whether people remain connected to services.

Several conversations highlighted the limitations of compliance-driven systems. Participants described tensions between documentation requirements and relationship-building, standardized policies and individualized care, performance metrics and human connection. These discussions suggested that systems can inadvertently reproduce barriers when efficiency becomes prioritized over humanity.

Community Conversations also revealed that many participants already serve as agents of relational transformation within imperfect systems. Participants routinely described adapting policies, advocating for flexibility, building partnerships, translating systems for clients, and creating opportunities for belonging and healing. These practices often occurred in the spaces between formal organizational procedures and lived community realities.

The findings further suggest that communities of practice function as mechanisms for systems transformation. By bringing together professionals from different organizations, disciplines, regions, and lived experiences, the Community Conversations created opportunities for participants to collectively examine system challenges, identify promising practices, and develop shared understandings of effective service delivery. These conversations fostered cross-sector learning and strengthened relational networks capable of supporting broader systems change efforts.

An equally important finding involved the role of community cultural wealth within systems transformation. Participants consistently leveraged cultural strengths, community knowledge, lived expertise, family networks, storytelling traditions, and collective resilience to navigate and improve systems. These forms of capital frequently served as bridges between individuals and institutions, helping create more responsive and culturally grounded pathways to support.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that sustainable systems change requires more than technical solutions. Effective transformation occurs when structural improvements are paired with relational, cultural, and community-centered approaches that recognize the dignity, wisdom, and strengths of the people most directly affected by housing instability, behavioral health challenges, and systemic inequities. Human-centered systems change therefore requires investment not only in programs, policies, and infrastructure, but also in relationships, communities of practice, cultural assets, and the collective capacities that allow individuals and communities to thrive.

Historical Training Provision in New Mexico

Dolores Huerta said, “Honor the hands that harvest your crops.” In New Mexico this may mean many things depending on your location, upbringing, and history. For our community members tending to acequias and truly harvesting crops the words apply to everyday life. However, traditional New Mexican leaders supporting our most vulnerable have demonstrated similar practices, values, and have reaped harvests that contribute to the wellbeing of their communities for generations.

New Mexico’s training and capacity-building practices have emerged directly from local expertise, generational knowledge, and long-standing community collectives of care. Rather than importing one-size-fits-all models, practitioners have drawn on family-based caregiving traditions, mutual aid networks, Indigenous and land-based ways of knowing, and grassroots organizing to shape how frontline providers are prepared and supported. These community-rooted approaches have informed everything from peer support models and critical incident debriefing practices to values-driven supervision, recognition systems, and trauma-responsive communication norms inside organizations.

Though rarely captured in formal documentation, the wisdom, healing practices, and collective action that sustain our communities have been faithfully transmitted across generations, preserved through oral tradition, storytelling, and the foundational narratives that gave rise to our people's most enduring helping traditions. By explicitly connecting these historical and community-derived approaches to current strategies, such as structured debrief templates, collaborative statewide resource compendia, and leadership academies focused on equity, data storytelling, and staff well-being, this work elevates lived experience as core evidence, not an afterthought. Training content, facilitation styles, and organizational tools are intentionally designed to reflect New Mexico’s cultural mix, local language, relational norms, and the realities of under-resourced settings, rather than abstract best practices detached from place.

Grounding findings in these cultural and practical realities helps ensure that capacity-building is not only technically sound, but also legitimate and sustainable in community eyes. It strengthens long-term impact by aligning formal training with the ways New Mexicans have long known how to care for one another: collectively, relationally, and with deep attention to context, history, and shared responsibility.

New Mexico’s Cultural Perspectives on Wisdom Sharing

“Querencia is love of home, love of place.” —Rudolfo Anaya

Across five Leadership Academies, a clear and consistent truth emerged: leadership in New Mexico is inseparable from community. Whether navigating financial constraints, responding to crisis, recruiting and retaining staff, or communicating data, leaders consistently returned to the same source of strength: the relational, intergenerational, and culturally grounded knowledge that has always sustained New Mexican communities. These academies were not simply training events. They were community conversations, rooted in practices they sought to cultivate, with honor to the places those who participated called home.
From mission-driven leadership to data storytelling, participants wove together lived experience, local wisdom, and peer accountability into a shared framework for practice. What follows is a synthesis of the plática that defines the outcomes and next steps for all five academies. These conversations did not result in separate lessons, but continued throughout the cohorts as one unified body of learning.

Los Recursos de Ganas: Community as Resource

One of the most consistent themes across the academies was the active role of generational and intergenerational wisdom in shaping how leaders think, decide, and act. In New Mexico, elders, seasoned practitioners, and community mentors are not background figures, they are essential guides. Leaders across all five academies

described seeking guidance from experienced colleagues and community partners, integrating that wisdom into organizational practices, and building it into how they train and support staff.

This intergenerational orientation shaped everything from how debrief protocols were designed to how funding decisions were framed. Historical community strategies for care, mentorship, and problem-solving were understood not as the past but as active tools—informing modern capacity-building efforts, recognition systems, and approaches to communication. The academies reinforced that honoring what came before is not nostalgia; it is a leadership strategy.

- **Honoring Generational Wisdom:** Leaders actively seek guidance from experienced colleagues and community elders, integrating their insights into organizational practices and decision-making.
- **Bridging Past and Present:** Historical community strategies for care, mentorship, and problem-solving inform modern tools, recognition systems, and capacity-building efforts.
- **Co-Creation and Intergenerational Learning:** Solutions are developed collaboratively, blending contemporary strategies with insights drawn from decades of local practice, ensuring practices are culturally grounded, adaptable, and enduring.

To do something "con ganas" is often translated as to do something with guts. However, the term is much more than that. Ganas represent cultural resilience and the sacrifices of those who came before us. It is the power we each inherit within ourselves to change, create, and nurture the communities we live in. Ganas give us responsibility and drive, not only to act, but to carry the rich history and insight of those who came before us.

Adelante Con Cariño

Across all five Leadership Academies, relationships were understood as infrastructure, not as a soft complement to systems, but as the foundation on which sustainable systems are built. In high-stress, resource-constrained environments, it is the webs of connection between colleagues, community members, agencies, and generations that allow leaders and staff to persist and serve effectively.

This showed up in how leaders approached recruitment and retention, where relational care was central to keeping staff grounded and supported. It showed up in financial stewardship, where fundraising was reframed as an act of communal service rather than an organizational task. It showed up in crisis response, where peer-supported debriefs and cross-agency collaboration were not procedural niceties but essential recovery tools. And it showed up in data storytelling, where the goal was always to return numbers to the human relationships and community realities behind them.

- **Strengthening Relational Networks:** Intergenerational and cross-organizational connections create webs of support that allow leaders and staff to persist in high-stress, resource-constrained environments.
- **Relational Leadership and Community Connection:** Leaders draw on the guidance of seasoned colleagues, elders, and community partners, reinforcing webs of care that are historically central to sustaining New Mexican communities.
- **Staff Care as Community Practice:** Emotional support, aftercare, and trauma-informed check-ins are embedded in response systems, drawing on traditions of mutual aid, intergenerational guidance, and relational accountability.

- **Shared Stewardship Across the Community:** Cultivating a culture where all staff understand how resources support the people they serve—fundraising becomes an act of service, grounded in collective responsibility and communal values.

At every level of this work, from direct service to project design, from grant writing to fiduciary oversight, we are called to return to our roots and reclaim, with integrity, the practice of being in genuine relationship with one another. This is not an aspirational language. It is a cultural inheritance. New Mexico's communities have long demonstrated that when the moment demands it, we show up. Commitment to the communities we serve is rooted in tradition and passed down to future generations through the practice of "showing up." In choosing to honor one another as vital members of our communities, New Mexicans have built trust- based systems of care that have sustained communities for generations. To honor the deeply rooted practice of "showing up" means more than invoking a sense of trust and commitment in mission statements. When we bring tradition into practice, we invoke *cariño* and are reminded of the responsibility tied to the missions we discuss at shared tables.

This extends to how we understand the role of funders, policymakers, and systems partners. The burden of responsibility does not increase by rank; in fact, responsibility is universal. Power-holders are not separate from this relational covenant. The decision for community leaders to engage in relationship-based changemaking that occurs within the communities we serve is an invitation to utilize skills, connections, and partake in relationships defined by this shared responsibility.

Hearing what communities share, trusting what they name as true, and acting on it with integrity are the hallmarks of servant leadership and the honoring of relationships. Understanding the role of providers as stewards of the relationships they have built with the people they serve means that leaders choose to become reinforcers, accountable for contributing to the sustainability of these networks of care that make up the service infrastructure within our state. Whether our role is project management, resource stewardship, or partnership design, the central components of relationship (care, connection and shared stewardship) must extend far past our frontline workers. As leaders, participating in the retention of the relationships built with those served by community organizations must become an everyday action and our contribution to sustainable systems of care.

Cariño is the gift of care, love, and compassion toward another human being whom you value. It is the practice of intentional social connection rooted in kindness and deep respect for the identities of those we interact with. To engage with someone "con cariño" means that not only have you taken the time to understand the realities within which a person lives, but you have also cultivated values grounded in positive regard for those in your care. It reflects a commitment to recognizing not only the value that someone contributes, but also the inherent worth they possess as a human being.

Indigenous Epistemology

Wóksape is the Lakota value of wisdom. It is not wisdom in the abstract, but knowledge earned through lived experience, observation, and the willingness to learn across the full course of one's life. Central to Wóksape is the role of elders as carriers and transmitters of that knowledge, whose understanding of the sacred way of life, of natural processes, and of one's responsibilities to community and to all living things, is recognized as essential to the health and continuity of the people. Wóksape calls us not only to receive that wisdom, but to share it, so that others may learn, live well, and carry it forward.

A defining commitment across all five academies was the elevation of lived experience as a form of expertise—equally as valid as credentialed knowledge, and often more relevant to the communities being served. Frontline staff, community members, and the people programs exist to serve were consistently named as essential sources of insight, not just recipients of services.
In practice, this meant training approaches were shaped by the knowledge of those doing the work. It meant communication strategies were designed to reflect the values and rhythms of community life, not just

organizational messaging goals. It meant that culturally grounded knowledge—Tribal histories, local traditions, family structures—was treated as the necessary context for any decision, whether about staffing, funding, or how to tell a story with data. Centering lived experience was not a gesture toward inclusion; it was recognized as a practical condition for relevance, trust, and long-term impact.

- **Centering Lived Experience:** Practical, culturally grounded knowledge from frontline staff and community members shapes training approaches, ensuring relevance, trust, and long-term impact.
- **Honoring Lived Experience and Values:** Staff and community histories, local knowledge, and personal experience are treated as essential guides for decision-making, recognition, and culture-building.
- **Rooted in Local Context:** Recognizing that geography, organizational size, Tribal or rural context, and community networks shape what's possible—strategies honor local knowledge and the realities of New Mexico's unique urban, rural, and Tribal landscapes.

Lived experience is a form of expertise. Dr. Lyla June Johnston, a Diné scholar and cultural historian, draws on her doctoral research in Indigenous land management to demonstrate that knowledge developed through thousands of years of intentional stewardship and service to all living things is rigorous, consequential, and generative. Central to her work is the principle of designing for perpetuity, planning not for the next fiscal quarter, but for generations not yet born. This same orientation anchors the work of Dr. Theodore Jojola and the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute at the University of New Mexico, where Indigenous planning is grounded in the seven generational framework, a practice in which an individual's extended responsibility spans three generations before and three generations after their own. Both bodies of work challenge institutions to reconsider what counts as knowledge and who is recognized as a knower. Lived experience, in this context, is not supplementary data. It is a structured, intergenerational epistemology.

Uno Nace Siendo Promotora

The academies themselves modeled the approach they were teaching. Learning was not delivered from the front of a room—it was facilitated through dialogue, co-creation, peer exchange, and shared reflection. This mirrored traditional New Mexican approaches to learning: relational, interdependent, and grounded in the practical wisdom of the group.

Whether developing debrief templates for crisis response, designing culturally attuned funding strategies, or crafting data narratives that honor community context, participants worked together to build tools that reflected their lived realities. Small, intentional steps and community conversation were valued over sweeping directives. Peer accountability replaced top-down compliance. This approach recognized that the people closest to the work are also closest to the solutions.

- **Community-Centered Learning:** Facilitated dialogue and co-creation complement traditional training, allowing leaders to integrate local knowledge, shared purpose, and contextual insights into decision-making.
- **Collaborative Learning and Shared Resources:** Peer-to-peer exchanges, cross-agency collaboration, and community conversations foster trust, normalize problem-solving together, and preserve practical knowledge for future leaders.
- **Culturally Grounded Protocols and Templates:** Leaders co-create tools, checklists, and safety templates that reflect local realities, community norms, and the diverse contexts of New Mexico shelters, schools, and home-visiting programs.

- **Walking Together — Peer Learning and Accountability:** Using small, intentional steps, community conversation, and peer support to turn insight into action—relational, interdependent, and iterative, with shared accountability for the long-term well-being of staff and communities.

Promotoras are trusted community members who serve as cultural and social liaisons between their communities and the resources, systems, and institutions that affect their daily lives. They advocate, raise awareness, and bridge gaps that formal institutions often cannot reach. Promotoras walk alongside those they serve, rooted in the understanding that knowledge is power and that access to that knowledge is itself a form of empowerment.

Sacred Stories, Sacred Circle Practices

Across the academies, communication was understood as a cultural practice—not simply the transmission of information, but the carrying of values, histories, and relationships. Whether sharing data with a funder, conducting a debrief after a critical incident, or building transparency with staff about resources, how leaders communicate reflects and shapes the culture of their organizations and communities.

Participants explored how moral frameworks and shared values influence the stories told—and heard. They examined how quantitative data could be paired with qualitative community stories to create messages that are both accurate and deeply human. They practiced 'right data, right audience, right time,' while also naming the ethical responsibilities that come with representing communities who are often already over-surveilled and under-resourced. Communication, in this framing, is always an act of accountability.

- **Communication as Cultural Practice:** Transparent, multichannel, and interactive communication mirrors traditional ways knowledge is shared across families and communities, ensuring information is accessible, inclusive, and trusted.
- **Stories That Honor:** Framing data storytelling as a way to lift up the lived experiences, histories, and values of New Mexico communities—blending quantitative numbers with qualitative stories that reflect the rhythms of local life, Tribal histories, and culturally grounded priorities.
- **People, Not Numbers:** Connecting statistics with the human realities behind them—housing challenges, family resilience, and cultural traditions—so that data serves community rather than reducing it.
- **Shared Values:** Reflecting on how personal and organizational values shape communication, fostering more empathetic listening and responsible interpretation across diverse audiences.
- **Respecting Limits and Context:** Telling ethical, responsible stories while honoring uncertainty and context, rather than overstating claims from small datasets or fluctuating program counts.

Talking Circles are a foundational practice rooted in the traditions of Indigenous peoples across North America, used to ensure that all voices are heard, that those who speak are not interrupted, and that the knowledge, stories, and words shared within the circle are held with reverence. The circle itself is understood as sacred, representing wholeness, the cycles of life, and the interconnectedness of all people. These practices have long supported healing, conflict resolution, and collective decision making within communities. First Nations communities have shared Circle practices with non-Native peoples as a means of returning to Indigenous ways of addressing harm and as an alternative to systems that have historically failed their communities. What those communities offered was not simply a technique, but a philosophy, a set of principles, and a way of being in relationship with one another.

El Deber de Cuidar, Proteger, y Preservar

Running through all five academies was a shared concern with sustainability—of organizations, of staff, and of community. In environments where resources are constrained and demands are high, leaders must build systems that are resilient enough to absorb pressure without breaking, and adaptive enough to respond to changing conditions without losing their grounding.

This meant designing anti-fragile funding practices that stabilize core programs before pursuing growth. It meant building crisis response protocols that include staff care and trauma-informed aftercare, not just incident management. It meant creating learning experiences—drills, simulations, shared templates—that build organizational muscle memory across languages, abilities, and trauma histories. Sustainability, in this context, was always understood relationally: the well-being of staff and the well-being of community are not separate concerns.

- **Preparedness Through Practice:** Drills, simulations, and visual, accessible guidance build 'muscle memory' for crises while respecting diverse abilities, languages, and trauma histories—learning rooted in experience and lived context.
- **Funding That Honors Place and People:** Anti-fragile practices include stabilizing core programs, pausing growth when needed, and aligning resources with mission, community priorities, and relational responsibilities.
- **Walking Together to Strengthen Stories:** Building community through shared reflection, peer learning, and collective accountability—leaders supporting each other in integrating new practices and sustaining ongoing improvement.

Throughout our state, communities carry the sacred knowledge that water is life. Our farming communities use acequias to irrigate crops, feed livestock, and support entire communities. Honoring the gift of water as the lifeblood of our communities is how we as New Mexicans honor our people, prepare for future needs, and contribute to the preservation of the very resource that sustains us. When our acequias run dry, land and wellbeing become compromised. People who serve as knowledge keepers of long practiced traditions come together to defend and protect the very thing that will nourish their communities for generations to come. As members of communities served by vital resources, we have a duty to assume the roles of Mayordomos and Parciantes, accepting el deber de cuidar, proteger, y preservar, the duty to care for, protect, and preserve, for those who are here today and those who have yet to arrive. As collective communities that hold rights to the resources we utilize to provide for our communities, we must care for and preserve opportunities for sustainability and our futures. That same ethic of stewardship extends to our most vulnerable community members. When people are without shelter, without stability, and without access to the resources that sustain life, it is a signal that our community systems need tending. Sustainability is only real when it reaches everyone.

Implications for Workforce Development, Policy, and Systems Change

The findings from this evaluation have important implications for future workforce development efforts, organizational practice, systems planning, and public investment. Seven implications are detailed below.

1. Workforce development initiatives should expand beyond traditional training models that focus primarily on technical competencies. While technical skills remain important, participants consistently emphasized relational, reflective, and adaptive capacities as essential components of effective practice. Future workforce development efforts should intentionally cultivate competencies such as relationship-building, trauma-informed engagement, cultural humility, reflective practice, collaborative leadership, emotional regulation, and systems thinking.

2. Strong support for continued investment in Communities of Practice as a workforce development strategy is comprehensively underscored throughout the findings. The Community Conversations demonstrated that learning occurs not only through formal instruction but also through dialogue, peer consultation, mentorship, and shared reflection. Communities of Practice create opportunities for participants to exchange knowledge, reduce professional isolation, strengthen professional identity, and collaboratively address complex challenges. Future workforce initiatives should consider incorporating ongoing peer learning structures, reflective communities, and cross-sector networking opportunities as core program components rather than supplemental activities.

3. Workforce sustainability must be understood through both structural and relational lenses. While competitive compensation, staffing capacity, and organizational resources remain critical, participants repeatedly identified emotional sustainability, belonging, peer support, supervision, and opportunities for reflection as equally important factors influencing retention and effectiveness. Workforce strategies that fail to address emotional labor and secondary trauma may struggle to achieve long-term sustainability.

4. Recognizing and leveraging Community Cultural Wealth within workforce systems is valued by participants. Participants consistently demonstrated social, navigational, aspirational, linguistic, familial, resistant, spiritual, and experiential forms of capital that strengthened both service delivery and organizational functioning. Workforce development initiatives should move beyond deficit-oriented frameworks and intentionally recognize, cultivate, and build upon the cultural assets that already exist within communities and professional networks.

5. The value of lived expertise as a workforce asset is underscored in this analysis. Participants with lived experience of homelessness, recovery, behavioral health challenges, caregiving, trauma, incarceration, and systems involvement contributed important knowledge, credibility, and leadership capacity. Future workforce strategies should continue to strengthen pathways for peer support specialists, community health workers, individuals with lived expertise, and community leaders to assume meaningful leadership roles within housing and homelessness systems.

6. Effective leadership development should focus on adaptive, collaborative, and community-centered leadership models. Participants consistently described leadership as a shared responsibility grounded in relationship-building, cultural humility, learning, and service to community. Leadership development initiatives should therefore prioritize relational competencies alongside traditional management and administrative skills.

7. This initiative has important implications for systems transformation efforts. Participants consistently demonstrated that housing stability, behavioral health recovery, and community wellbeing are influenced by both structural conditions and relational experiences. Effective systems change requires investment not only in housing resources, workforce capacity, service integration, and policy reform, but also in the relationships, trust, cultural responsiveness, and community partnerships that allow systems to function effectively in practice.

When considered together, these findings suggest that strengthening New Mexico's housing and homelessness workforce requires a comprehensive approach that integrates technical expertise, relational capacity, cultural wealth, lived expertise, and collective learning. Investments in workforce development should therefore be

understood not simply as investments in individual workers, but as investments in the relationships, communities of practice, and collective capacities that support sustainable systems of care. By building upon the strengths already present within New Mexico's workforce and communities, future initiatives can contribute to a more resilient, culturally responsive, and community-centered system capable of advancing housing stability, recovery, and wellbeing across the state.

Family Stabilization

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McKinney-Vento Programming

For nearly four decades, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act has served as the primary federal commitment to ensuring that children and youth experiencing homelessness can access and remain in school. First enacted in 1987, and most recently reauthorized through the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, the law establishes a clear principle: housing instability should never be a barrier to education. Under McKinney-Vento, children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate place to sleep are entitled to immediate school enrollment, the right to remain in their school of origin, and access to the same educational opportunities available to all other students (National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE], 2025).

The law's definition of homelessness is intentionally broad. It includes youth sleeping outdoors or in shelters, as well as those who are doubled up with family or friends due to economic hardship, staying in motels, or living in other temporary and inadequate arrangements. This breadth reflects an understanding that homelessness is often not visible and that the families most in need are frequently the hardest to identify. Unaccompanied youth, defined as those not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, are specifically recognized under the law and carry additional protections, including the right to self-enroll and to be informed of their status as independent students for financial aid purposes (SchoolHouse Connection, 2024a).

A cornerstone of McKinney-Vento implementation is the local homeless education liaison, a position that every school district is required to designate regardless of whether it receives federal funding. Liaisons are responsible for identifying students experiencing homelessness, ensuring immediate enrollment, connecting families to services, and supporting district-wide awareness of student rights (SchoolHouse Connection, 2024a).

Funding and Scale

The federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program provides formula grants to state education agencies, which then competitively subgrant funds to local school districts. These funds supplement district services, including transportation, tutoring, and supplies. In FY2024 and FY2025, Congress appropriated approximately $129 million for EHCY. Despite bipartisan support, funding reaches only about 20% of school districts nationwide, leaving most districts to meet requirements without dedicated federal support (SchoolHouse Connection, 2024b).

Public schools identified more than 1.54 million students experiencing homelessness in the 2023–2024 school year, representing a 28.5% increase over the last three reporting years (U.S. Department of Education, 2026). The FY2026 federal budget process introduced new uncertainty when the Administration proposed consolidating 18 education programs, potentially including EHCY, into a single block grant. The House Appropriations Committee rejected that approach and preserved dedicated EHCY funding, but the episode underscored the ongoing vulnerability of the program and the importance of sustained advocacy at both the state and federal level (SchoolHouse Connection, 2025b).

Homelessness in New Mexico

New Mexico faces significant homelessness challenges driven by structural poverty, housing shortages, and service gaps. In 2024, 16.4% of New Mexicans lived below the federal poverty line, compared to a national average of 10.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026). The state consistently ranks among the poorest in the nation, and the conditions that produce poverty, including low labor force participation, high rates of substance use, and limited economic mobility in rural and Tribal areas, are the same conditions that produce homelessness (Legislative Finance Committee [LFC], 2023).

The housing market has compounded these challenges significantly. Since 2017, rent in New Mexico has increased by an estimated 70% while household income has grown far more slowly over the same period (LFC, 2023). Median home prices followed a similar trajectory, reaching approximately $300,000 statewide by 2024 (MFA, 2025). The result is that more than half of New Mexico renters are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. The state has an estimated shortage of 32,000 deeply affordable rental units, a gap concentrated among households earning below 30% of the area median income (MFA, 2023). As

affordable units disappear and costs rise, more families are pushed toward homelessness or into the informal and unstable arrangements that the McKinney-Vento Act was designed to address.

Point-in-time counts, which are conducted on a single night each year, identified approximately 4,631 individuals experiencing homelessness in New Mexico in 2024, including 2,389 who were sheltered and 2,242 who were unsheltered (MFA, 2025). These single-night counts are widely understood to undercount the full scope of the problem. The New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness (NMCEH) estimates that the number of people who experience homelessness over the course of a full year may be closer to 19,000 to 20,000, more than four times higher than point-in-time totals (NMCEH, 2023). According to point-in-time data, families with children represent 19.2% of the counted homeless population, unaccompanied youth represent 4.5%, and 39.9% meet the federal definition of chronically homeless, meaning they have experienced homelessness for at least one year and have a disabling condition (MFA, 2025). New Mexico's rate of chronic homelessness is higher than that of neighboring states, reflecting persistent barriers to moving people from emergency settings into stable, permanent housing.

Homelessness in New Mexico is not evenly distributed. According to HUD data analyzed in the state's housing needs assessment, Native American residents are significantly overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, comprising roughly 25% of the homeless population in the Albuquerque area while making up approximately 7% of people living in poverty in that region (MFA, 2023). Rural and Tribal communities face compounding disadvantages, including higher poverty rates, fewer services, and limited transportation infrastructure. The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that 32% of children in New Mexico under the age of 18 live in low-income households and 44% live in households with a high housing cost burden (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024).

For children and youth, the effects of unstable housing extend well beyond shelter. Students experiencing homelessness are nearly twice as likely to be chronically absent from school, are more likely to have unmet special education needs, and graduate at rates far below their peers (SchoolHouse Connection, 2025a). In New Mexico, public schools identified 11,735 such students in the 2023–2024 school year, representing 3.8% of total enrollment and exceeding the national average of 3.2% (U.S. Department of Education, 2026). Looking at 2022-2023 school year data in NM, of those identified, 71.8% were in doubled-up situations, reflecting how often homelessness goes unseen in school data (New Mexico Public Education Department [NMPED], 2025). Looking at national data for the school year 2023-2024, the percentage of doubled-up students increased 28.4% from 2021-2022. A research study of students living doubled-up showed that students had significantly lower grade point averages, more truancy problems, and were less likely to graduate on time than students in permanent housing (Low et al., 2017).

Research also suggests that schools identify only a portion of eligible students, with youth risk survey data indicating that actual prevalence among high school students may be significantly higher than rates captured in school records (NMPED, 2022). This gap means that many students legally entitled to McKinney-Vento protections and services are not receiving them.

NMPED administers the state's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program and requires every school district and charter school to designate a local homeless education liaison. The state provides a dispute resolution process for cases where families and districts disagree on school selection and maintains resources for liaisons on identification, enrollment, transportation, and higher education access. However, implementation varies considerably across the state's 89 school districts. Many liaisons carry the role alongside numerous other responsibilities, with limited training and no dedicated case management infrastructure. The absence of formalized housing-focused functions within the liaison role means that school-based supports and housing stabilization efforts often operate in parallel rather than in coordination, leaving families to navigate two separate systems on their own (NMPED, 2025).

A Comprehensive Framework for Resolving Youth and Family Homelessness

Stable housing is a critical foundation for individual wellbeing, economic participation, and long-term success for children, youth, and families. Effectively resolving youth and family homelessness requires coordinated

intervention across five complementary strategies: structural prevention, systems prevention, early intervention, eviction prevention, and housing stabilization (Gaetz et al., 2024). Each strategy targets a distinct point along the pathway to homelessness, and together they provide a comprehensive approach that addresses both immediate crises and the upstream conditions that produce them (Gaetz & Dej, 2017).

Structural Prevention

Structural prevention addresses the upstream, societal-level conditions that place individuals and families at risk of homelessness in the first place. This includes policies and programs that reduce poverty, improve housing affordability, provide income supports, expand access to education and employment, and address systemic discrimination. Structural prevention does not target people already experiencing homelessness but rather changes the conditions that make homelessness likely for particular populations (Gaetz et al., 2024).

Systems Prevention

Systems prevention focuses on the multiple public systems through which young people and families often transition into homelessness, including child welfare, criminal justice, health care, and education. It requires that each system take responsibility for its role in housing instability by building in transition planning, inter-agency coordination, and support to prevent discharge into homelessness. For schools, systems prevention means recognizing that educational disengagement and instability can both cause and reflect housing precarity (Gaetz et al., 2024).

Early Intervention

Early intervention provides targeted support to young people and families who are beginning to show signs of housing instability or who have recently experienced homelessness for the first time. The goal is to interrupt the trajectory toward chronic or long-term homelessness before it becomes entrenched. Early intervention strategies include coordinated intake and assessment, client-centered case management, shelter diversion, and outreach to populations at risk (Gaetz et al., 2024).

Eviction Prevention

Eviction prevention is a specific form of early intervention designed to keep people stably housed and help them avoid losing their housing. It includes landlord-tenant mediation, emergency rental assistance, flexible financial supports, and legal advice and representation. For youth and families navigating housing instability, eviction prevention is often the most immediate and actionable point of intervention. It can prevent a temporary financial crisis from becoming a prolonged period of homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2024; Gaetz et al., 2018).

Housing Stabilization

Housing stabilization provides support to people who have already experienced homelessness to help them find, secure, and maintain stable housing. It encompasses Housing First approaches, case management, access to supportive services, community connection, and ongoing support to avoid re-entry into homelessness. For young people especially, housing stabilization requires developmentally appropriate supports that address social inclusion, education, employment, and relationship building alongside the immediate housing need (Gaetz et al., 2024).

One of the most promising vehicles for delivering housing stabilization support to young people is already present in many New Mexico communities: the community school. Community schools function as neighborhood hubs, connecting students and families to health services, social supports, and housing navigation resources through partnerships with local providers from within the school building and community itself. When a student is experiencing housing instability, the community school model means that the first trusted adult they encounter each morning is also connected to the systems that can help. This kind of relational infrastructure, where schools and community organizations are not parallel systems but genuine partners, is exactly what effective housing stabilization for young people requires. Formalizing these partnerships and investing in them as a core component of McKinney-Vento implementation, would strengthen the state's capacity to identify students early, respond

quickly, and sustain stability over time. Schools are not simply places where children receive instruction; in New Mexico's communities, they have always been gathering places. That role carries both responsibility and opportunity.

Housing stabilization for young people does not happen through paperwork alone. It happens through relationships, such as with a navigator who knows a young person's name, understands their family situation, and stays consistent through the disruptions that housing instability creates. Yet in New Mexico today, there is no standardized model for who provides this kind of support to students experiencing homelessness, how they are trained, or how their work is coordinated across the education, housing, and social service systems that young people move through simultaneously.

Strong models from other states point toward what is possible. In Texas, the state's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program has invested in dedicated, housing-focused staff who work alongside McKinney-Vento liaisons rather than replacing them. This creates a two-person system of educational compliance and housing case management that keeps both functions strong. In Colorado and Washington, some districts have embedded community navigators directly into school buildings, with explicit protocols for hand-offs between school staff, housing providers, and mental health services. What these models share is a recognition that young people experiencing homelessness need more than referrals. Students need someone whose specific job is to walk with them until they are stable and safe.

New Mexico has the knowledge, community relationships, and the frontline talent to build this kind of system. What is missing is the formalization: clear role definitions, training standards, and funding structures that make these positions sustainable rather than dependent on the priorities of any single district or grant cycle. The sections that follow outline a vision for an enhanced McKinney-Vento Liaison role that begins to address this gap and the legislative investments that would make it real across the state.

Schools and social work have historically operated in parallel rather than in genuine partnership, each system managing its own piece of a young person's life without sufficient coordination or mutual understanding. Yet for students experiencing housing instability, this separation is neither sustainable nor ethical. Social workers and school personnel bring complementary expertise: schools understand educational continuity, assessment systems, and the daily rhythms of a young person's academic life; social workers bring training in trauma response, systems navigation, and the family and community contexts that shape stability. When these two professions work in isolation, young people fall through gaps. When they work together—sharing information with appropriate confidentiality safeguards, coordinating their interventions, and centering the young person's voice in planning—the entire support system becomes stronger and more responsive. This partnership is not a luxury; it is a structural requirement for effective housing stabilization. Schools cannot resolve homelessness alone. Social work cannot ensure educational continuity without schools. The question is not whether these systems should coordinate. The question is how to formalize, fund, and sustain that coordination so it becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Building Bridges Project · 2025-2026

Santa Fe Public Schools

Adelante Program · Santa Fe, New Mexico

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Element	Detail
Administering Organization	Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) Adelante Program
Program Type	Pilot Initiative
Program Goal	Serve families of students enrolled in Santa Fe Public Schools
Maximum Award Per Family	$11,000
Pilot End Date	June 2026
Case Management Partners	Homewise, Guadalupe Credit Union, Nusenda Credit Union, Sky Center, Gerard's House, Felt Sense Psychotherapy, Many Mothers, Growing Up New Mexico
Student Population Served	Students enrolled in Santa Fe Public Schools through the SFPS Adelante Program

PROGRAM MODEL AND FAMILY-CENTERED PLANNING

The Building Bridges Project is built around a family-centered planning model in which each family works with an assigned Family Support Specialist to develop an individualized Building Bridges Family Plan. Each family identifies and ranks up to five priority support areas and selects their Financial Education and Family Development providers. This plan drives all resource support decisions made on behalf of the family throughout their participation in the program.

Family Support Specialists play a central role in the project, conducting biweekly check-ins with participating families throughout the course completion phase, confirming documentation is being gathered, and addressing any barriers. Specialists coordinate with program leadership to process resource support and are responsible for maintaining all records in the Adelante database and the Building Bridges Tracker.

ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLLMENT

Participation in the Building Bridges Project is governed by a defined set of eligibility requirements applied consistently across all candidate families. The baseline eligibility threshold requires that all SFPS-enrolled children in the household either currently maintain a 90% or higher monthly school attendance rate or demonstrate a reasonable likelihood of achieving that threshold with program support.

Upon enrollment, the Family Support Specialist and family work through the Building Bridges Family Plan Workbook together, establishing a shared understanding of program expectations, timelines, and documentation requirements. Prior to the conclusion of the enrollment meeting, each family reviews and signs a Release of Liability Waiver, a Release of Information, and the Building Bridges Project Family Agreement.

CORE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCE DELIVERY

To qualify for stabilization resource support, participating families must complete three core components: Financial Education, Family Development, and demonstration that all SFPS-enrolled children maintain a 90% or higher monthly school attendance rate. All three requirements must be satisfied before resource support is initiated. Upon satisfaction of all requirements, families receive support directed toward their self-identified priority needs, up to the program maximum of $11,000 per family.

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES BY PRIORITY AREA

Priority Area	Eligible Expenditures
Housing Stability	Rent, mortgage, utilities, security deposits, moving costs, application fees, short-term motel stays, pet deposits, and pest control or mold remediation.
Transportation	Vehicle repairs, gas cards, ride service vouchers, bus passes, driver's license reinstatement, and car registration or insurance costs.
Employment and Education Support	Job training, certification costs, work uniforms, childcare deposits, tutoring, technology for school or work, vital document replacement, and immigration or court filing fees.
Family Essentials	Clothing, food and grocery support, hygiene items, diapers, formula, and safe storage items.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Families are enrolled in the Building Bridges Project following identification by their assigned Family Support Specialist. At enrollment, the specialist and family work through the Building Bridges Family Plan Workbook together, establishing a shared understanding of program expectations, timelines, documentation requirements, and the resource support process. The family identifies and ranks up to five priority support areas and selects their Financial Education and Family Development providers.

Families are also asked to review and sign three required documents: the Release of Liability Waiver, the Release of Information authorizing coordination with community service providers, and the Building Bridges Project Family Agreement documenting the family's commitment to all program requirements.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for stabilization resource support, participating families must complete three core requirements. All three must be satisfied before resource support is initiated.

Requirement	Description
Financial Education	Completion of an approved financial literacy program covering budgeting, credit management, debt reduction, and financial planning.
Family Development	Participation in one of three approved pathways: Family Counseling, Parenting Support, or Expanded Financial Education.
Student Attendance	All SFPS-enrolled children must maintain a 90% or higher monthly school attendance rate for the applicable month prior to receiving resource support.

MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP

Following enrollment, Family Support Specialists conduct biweekly check-ins with participating families throughout the course completion phase to encourage progress, confirm that documentation is being gathered, and address any barriers. Upon confirmed completion of all program steps, the specialist submits the Building Bridges Family Closeout Form to program leadership, which initiates resource-support processing. Within two weeks of completion of all core requirements, the specialist conducts a follow-up check-in with the family and requests completion of the Building Bridges Family Survey.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Building Bridges Project is sustained by a network of approved community organizations that deliver the Financial Education and Family Development services required of participating families. All providers offer services in English and Spanish unless otherwise noted. Approved providers include Homewise, Guadalupe Credit Union, and Nusenda Credit Union for Financial Education; Sky Center, Gerard's House, and Felt Sense Psychotherapy for Family Counseling; Homewise for Expanded Financial Education; and Many Mothers and Growing Up New Mexico for Parenting Support.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Structured Design Linking Skills Development to Resource Support: The Building Bridges Project requires families to complete coursework in financial education and personal or family development before accessing stabilization support. This structure reflects a considered theory of change: that households equipped with practical financial and interpersonal skills are better positioned to sustain the stability that resource support is intended to create.

Individualized, Family-Centered Planning: The use of individualized Family Plans, developed collaboratively between each family and their assigned Family Support Specialist, ensures that stabilization support is tailored to the specific circumstances and priorities of each household. The priority-ranking process provides a structured mechanism for directing limited resources toward the needs most likely to produce stabilizing outcomes.

Direct Alignment with Educational Outcomes: By conditioning resource support on demonstrated monthly school attendance at or above the 90% threshold, the program creates a direct and measurable connection between household stabilization and student presence in school. The program's commitment to tracking student attendance, tardiness, behavioral incidents, and overall engagement positions it to generate credible, data-supported evidence of impact.

Accessible and Diverse Provider Network: The approved provider network offers meaningful flexibility with respect to service format, scheduling, and modality. Families may access services in person, online, or by telephone depending on the provider selected. The availability of services in both English and Spanish across approved providers supports broad accessibility for participating families.

Rigorous Accountability and Documentation Standards: The program establishes explicit and enforceable accountability expectations for all participating Family Support Specialists through a formal Participation and Work Hours Agreement. The stipend structure reinforces accountability directly: compensation is contingent upon full and verified program completion, creating a concrete incentive for thorough case management.

Shared Responsibilities and Clear Accountability: By conditioning family resource support on completion of program milestones, the program establishes clear accountability and fosters a model of shared responsibility. This structured approach ensures participating families maintain active ownership of their progress and long-term outcomes.

PROGRAM BUDGET

Budget Line Item	Amount
Family Support Specialist Stipends	$45,000
Benefits on Stipends	$18,855
Additional Compensation for Team Members	$61,929
Benefits on Additional Compensation	$27,007
Professional Development	$50,000
Contractors (Housing, Family Support, Legal Clinics)	$75,000
Supplies and Resource Management	$24,400
Resource Management: Gasoline	$5,000
Family Assistance Flex Funds (via PIE fiscal agent)	$992,092
PIE Managed Funds for Outreach Supplies	$18,000
SFPS Indirect Costs	$12,011
PIE Indirect Costs	$70,706
Reversion April 2026	($550,000)
Original Program Budget	**$1,400,000**
Budget After Reversion	**$850,000**

EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY

Category	Assists	Amount
Housing Stability	146	$283,091.35
Transportation	59	$99,177.99
Employment and Education Support	13	$12,867.94
Family Essentials	86	$72,053.05
Home Furnishings and Household Items	52	$169,353.69
Family Connection, Safety and Well-Being	9	$4,314.87
Credit Repair and Financial Recovery	8	$4,926.85
Health and Accessibility Needs	23	$24,371.89
Other or Unlisted Needs	3	$333.95
Total	**399**	**$670,491.58**

FAMILIES SERVED

Families Served to Date	**93**
McKinney-Vento Families	**93**
Doubled Up	47
Hotel/Motels	4
Shelters	2
Substandard	31
Accompanied Youth	84
Unaccompanied Youth	9

FAMILY FEEDBACK

This section reflects the final family feedback survey for the Building Bridges Project. Of the 93 participating families, 65 completed the survey, a 70% response rate. Across all six survey questions, between 85% and 94% of respondents strongly agreed, and 100% said they would recommend the project to other families. The counts below show Strongly Agree and Agree responses out of 65.

Survey Question (n = 65 respondents)	Strongly Agree (counts/%)	Agree (counts/%)
Building Bridges helped my family make progress toward financial or housing goals	60 (92%)	5 (8%)
Support from my Adelante Family Support Specialist was helpful and easy to understand	61 (94%)	3 (5%)
Financial Education and Family Development activities were useful and worth my time	59 (91%)	5 (8%)
Items or services received made a positive difference for my family	60 (92%)	4 (6%)
Because of Building Bridges, I feel more confident managing finances or planning for the future	55 (85%)	10 (15%)
I would recommend the Building Bridges Project to other families in similar situations	61 (94%)	4 (6%)

Note: One staff-support response was a strong disagreement, from a family who experienced difficulty with a specific staff member but was ultimately assisted by other team members and still recommends the project.

FAMILY-REPORTED OUTCOMES

This section provides an at-a glance summary of a self-administered survey completed by program participants upon the completion of the Building Bridges project.

Outcome	Families Agreeing
Progress toward financial or housing goals	100% (65 of 65)
Quality of staff support	98% (64 of 65)
Confidence managing finances or planning ahead	100% (65 of 65)
Would recommend the project to other families	100% (65 of 65)

WHAT FAMILIES FOUND MOST HELPFUL

Theme	What Families Described
Housing Support	Rent assistance, mortgage catch-up, and eviction prevention
Staff Support	Kind, patient, deeply personalized guidance
Financial Coaching	Online modules and in-person coaching sessions
Household Items	Furniture, clothing, and essentials assistance
Transportation Help	Vehicle repairs to maintain employment and get children to school
Emotional Support	Counseling, dignity, and belief in families' worth

FAMILY VOICES

Housing instability is one of the most consequential barriers to academic success and long-term well-being for children and youth. Eviction, overcrowding, frequent moves, and homelessness disrupt attendance, learning, peer relationships, and family stability, often creating effects that extend well beyond a single school year. In New Mexico, more than 10,500 students were identified as experiencing homelessness during the 2024-2025 school year, a number providers widely understand to be an undercount. In Santa Fe, the Adelante Program supports approximately 1,100 students experiencing housing instability across Santa Fe Public Schools each year. This persistent level of need underscores the importance of interventions that reach families before instability escalates into a deeper crisis.

> *"Me and my 6-year-old son were on the verge of getting evicted from our home. They helped me with my eviction notice and we were able to stay in our home. They paid for my vehicle to be fixed. It's an amazing program and I am so thankful to have been a part of it."* ***— Adina***

Building Bridges was designed as an upstream, family-centered stabilization model that responded to the realities families were facing with flexible and individualized support. Rather than treating housing instability as a single-issue challenge, the project recognized the interconnected barriers that affect family stability, including housing costs, transportation, employment, education, basic household needs, health and accessibility concerns, family safety, and credit repair. Families worked directly with Adelante McKinney-Vento Family Support Specialists to identify the specific barriers standing between them and stability and to access resources that matched their circumstances. The model was grounded in the belief that families already possess strength, knowledge, and determination, but often need timely support to bridge the gap between crisis and stability.

> *"I always thought I wasn't worthy enough. I never thought I could make it. Adelante made a big difference in that, it made me realize I was worth it and that I make a difference."* ***— Erika***

The significance of Building Bridges was also reflected in how support was delivered. Adelante's approach was not limited to distributing assistance; it was rooted in relationship, trust, cultural knowledge, and consistent follow-through. Families experiencing housing instability often interact with systems that are difficult to access, fragmented, or unreliable. Building Bridges offered a different experience by providing steady, respectful, bilingual support that treated families as partners in their own stabilization. This relational foundation was central to the project's effectiveness because families were not simply connected to resources; they were supported by a team that understood the importance of dignity, accountability, and trust.

That commitment became especially important when project funding was significantly reduced during implementation after families had already been told they could rely on the support. At that point, Adelante faced a consequential decision: reduce or withdraw assistance, or honor the commitments already made. The program chose to keep its promises. To do so, Adelante spent more than $100,000 from its own operational reserves, a substantial sacrifice that directly affected resources

intended to sustain the program itself. This decision was not only a financial response to a funding gap; it was an intentional act of accountability to families who had already experienced too many systems that failed to follow through.

> ***Honoring Our Commitments***
>
> When project funding was significantly reduced during implementation, Adelante faced a choice: reduce assistance or keep its promises. The program chose to honor its commitments, spending more than $100,000 from its own operational reserves to ensure no family was left behind.

The outcomes demonstrate the value of the Building Bridges model. One hundred percent of survey respondents reported that the project helped them make progress toward their financial or housing goals, and one hundred percent said they would recommend the project to another family. These results are meaningful because they reflect both practical progress and the deeper impact of a program that remained consistent when families needed it most. Building Bridges helped families address immediate barriers through concrete supports such as housing assistance, transportation, furnishings, financial coaching, health-related needs, and other essential resources, while also reinforcing the message that their stability and future mattered.

> *"The financial coaching helped me learn how to save money for the first time in my life. The housing support helped me catch up on bills I wouldn't have been able to otherwise. I felt supported every step of the way. This program changed my life." — **Denise***

Building Bridges offers a strong example of what early, flexible, family-centered intervention can accomplish when it is paired with trust and follow-through. The project recognized that housing instability is not the result of personal failure, but the product of broader economic pressures, limited affordable housing, poverty, trauma, social determinants of health and systemic inequity. Families came to Building Bridges seeking support to reach the stability they were already working toward. Adelante helped build that bridge family by family, barrier by barrier, and did so in a way that preserved the integrity of its commitments. The project's most important contribution may be that families experienced not only assistance but also proof, after being systemically failed time and again, that a system can keep its word. By delivering exactly what was promised, this initiative did more than distribute aid; it began the vital work of restoring trust where faith had long been broken, offering a powerful form of systemic reparation.

LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITIES

From its earliest days, Building Bridges was shaped by the families it set out to serve. Their circumstances defined the work, their priorities directed it, and their reflections continue to inform how the Adelante Program understands what succeeded and what can be strengthened. What follows captures what families and staff carried away from the project: the moments that mattered most, the practices that worked, and the lessons that will guide this work forward.

Family Voice

The response heard most consistently from participating families was one of deep, at times disbelieving, gratitude. For households that had spent years working toward stability without being able to close the gap, the support could feel almost surreal. Families marked their progress in personal ways, bringing homemade meals to staff, leaving flowers and handwritten notes, and offering their own time as volunteers. For the team, these gestures were among the most meaningful affirmations of the work. Throughout the project, navigators intentionally kept families in the lead, supporting them to name their own needs and to direct how their households would be stabilized, an approach that deepened participants' sense of ownership and gave the work lasting weight.

That sense of being met with dignity carried across language. Of the 65 families who responded to the survey, 57% completed it in Spanish, a reflection of the project's strong reach into Santa Fe's Spanish-speaking community. Satisfaction was equally high across both language groups, and Spanish-speaking families spoke with particular warmth about the program's bilingual staff, including Carmen, Ivan, Janet, and Yessenia, whose presence made support feel both accessible and personal.

What Worked Well

Several elements proved central to the program's effectiveness. Flexible, individualized funding allowed the team to respond to each family's specific circumstances rather than fitting households into predefined categories of aid. A relational, bilingual approach built trust with families who had often found other systems difficult to navigate. The family-led planning model ensured that support reflected what families themselves identified as most pressing. And strong community partnerships, with landlords, contractors, furniture providers, and case-management partners, extended the range of stabilization options the team could offer.

Keeping Our Promises

Perhaps the defining moment of the project came when its funding was significantly reduced partway through implementation, without warning. The Adelante Program faced a stark choice: scale back the help families had already been promised or absorb the shortfall and keep its word. Adelante chose its families. Honoring those commitments required drawing more than $100,000 from the program's own operational reserves, funds that take years to accumulate and exist to sustain the program itself. It was a significant sacrifice, made without hesitation. For families long accustomed to promises that went unkept, it was proof that this one would not.

Areas for Improvement

The most significant constraint the project faced was time: six months of implementation. Because the approvals and operational steps required to deploy funding compressed the start of direct services, the implementation window was considerably shorter than ideal. Even so, the program enrolled roughly 100 families within its first month; with a longer runway, navigators could have engaged each household more deeply and confirmed lasting stability before the project closed. The experience also reinforced the value of involving frontline staff, those working most closely with families, in major decisions, since their proximity to the work yields insight that strengthens outcomes. Above all, it affirmed that trust, once extended by families who have been failed before, depends on consistency, transparency, and follow-through.

Key Takeaways

- **Keep promises to families.** The decision to absorb a mid-project funding reduction and draw on the program's own operational reserves, rather than withdraw support, was the clearest expression of Adelante's commitment to the families it serves.
- **Preserve the family-led model.** Families directing their own stabilization with navigator support reinforced ownership, engagement, and dignity.
- **Allow adequate lead time.** Planning, approvals, and operational setup should be complete before funding must be deployed, so services can begin without delay.
- **Involve frontline staff in decisions.** Those working most closely with families hold insight that should inform significant or urgent choices.
- **Sustain bilingual capacity.** Bilingual staff made the program accessible and personal for Santa Fe's Spanish-speaking families.
- **Build trust through follow-through.** For families that have failed before, consistency, transparency, and fulfilled commitments matter most.
- **Data Standards.** Adopt a standardized data-collection template, with clear guidance provided at the outset regarding required information, to improve the consistency, and administrative efficiency and establish uniform data expectations of future reporting.
- **Sub-recipient Evaluation:** Standardize data collection across Family Stabilization sub-recipients to capture both participant outcomes and staff perspectives of program staff while maintaining the flexibility to evaluate unique, localized programming independently.
- **Financial and Output Alignment:** Establish clear methodology for tracking output data and expenditures across all participating school districts to ensure comparison across sites, fiscal accountability and program transparency.

FUNDED PILOT INITIATIVE · 2025-2026

Family Stabilization Project

Las Cruces Public Schools McKinney-Vento Program · Las Cruces, New Mexico

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Element	Detail
Administering Organization	Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS)
Program Type	Pilot Initiative
Program Goal	Serve approximately 100 families
Average Award Per Family	$8,000
Pilot Start Date	Jan 2026
Pilot End Date	June 2026
Case Management Partners	Tresco, FYI, and other community agencies as needed
Student Population Served	Students enrolled in Las Cruces Public Schools experiencing homelessness or housing instability

PROGRAM MODEL AND FAMILY-CENTERED PLANNING

The Family Stabilization Project is built around a family-centered planning model in which the family takes the lead in developing their own stabilization plan. Each family, working with a Community Navigator and McKinney-Vento liaison, identifies their specific housing needs and goals and determines what is required to become housed, remain housed, or make a substandard living situation livable. This plan drives all services and resource decisions made on behalf of the family throughout their participation in the program.

Community Navigators play a central role in the project, working directly with families to develop stabilization plans and coordinating with the program's fiscal agent to process payments. Navigators also provide ongoing follow-up with families as new needs arise. McKinney-Vento liaisons continue to provide case management alongside the navigators and connect families to community agencies including Tresco.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION AND ENROLLMENT

A core component of the program is the continued identification of students who qualify for McKinney-Vento services. This outreach work is conducted by McKinney-Vento staff, whose capacity has been extended through an additional hour's agreement to enable after-hours outreach and identification. The goal is to locate and assess every student and family that has been referred to the program or that may be in need of services but has not yet been identified. As students are identified, referrals are made to the Family Stabilization Project to initiate stabilization services.

Upon enrollment, each family completes an intake assessment that documents housing status, immediate needs, the presence of school-aged children, and barriers to stable housing. Families are assessed for housing risk, including whether they have received an eviction notice, have past-due bills or prior evictions affecting their ability to secure housing, and what supports would best address their situation.

FISCAL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCE DELIVERY

Resource support is delivered through four distinct Flex Fund categories, each covering a defined scope of eligible expenditures. The Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico serves as fiscal agent for the four flex funds, providing the infrastructure for timely and accountable processing of payments. Community Navigators work directly with the Community Foundation to execute payments on behalf of families. Flex Fund IV, the emergency category, includes the flexibility to transfer funds to other categories if a particular fund is running low and demand in another area is high.

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES BY FLEX FUND CATEGORY

Fund Category	Eligible Expenditures
Flex Fund I: Child and Youth Barriers to Stability and Basic Needs	Car repairs, clothing, utility arrears, back rent, public transit passes, gas cards, driver's license and ID replacement, food and grocery support, hygiene supplies, school supplies, extracurricular and graduation fees, tutoring, childcare deposits, prescription and over-the-counter health costs, counseling co-pays, job training and certification fees, interview clothing, work tools and equipment, eviction arrears, credit checks, court filing fees, vital document replacement, expungement costs, and lot fees for RVs, campers, or mobile homes.
Flex Fund II: Housing Subsidies	Utility deposits, application fees, first and last month's rent, security deposits, short-term motel stays, moving costs, past-due rent and eviction prevention, storage unit fees, credit and background check fees, lock changes, transportation for move-in, short-term rental assistance, pet deposits, renter's insurance, building access fees, childproofing and accessibility modifications, inadequate housing repairs, down payment for home or mobile home, and vital document replacement.
Flex Fund III: Stabilization Essentials	Housewares, furniture, linens, cleaning supplies, essential appliances, cookware and kitchenware, food starter kits, beds and mattresses, laundry supplies, toiletries and hygiene items, safety and comfort items including smoke detectors and fans or heaters, school and homework space setup, technology for internet or phone access, window coverings, rugs, lighting, trash and recycling supplies, basic tool kits, household consumables, pest control products, fire extinguishers, washer and dryer, and items to address unsafe living conditions including ADA issues, mold, or vermin.
Flex Fund IV: Emergencies	Any need not covered by Flex Funds I through III, including birth certificates, Social Security card replacement, identification fees, immigration paperwork fees, prepaid or replacement phones, internet installation, hotspots, work uniforms and safety gear, GED and credentialing fees, childcare deposits, extracurricular and graduation expenses, prescription co-pays, glasses, hearing aids, dental needs, car registration and insurance reinstatement, hotel or motel stays when other funds are exhausted, lock changes after domestic violence or safety risk, emergency food, diapers, hygiene products, and damages resulting from accidents or criminal activity that are minimal and could result in a loss of housing. Funds in this category may be transferred to another flex fund category if needed to meet emerging demands.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Families are enrolled in the Family Stabilization Project following a referral from McKinney-Vento staff. At enrollment, families complete an intake form documenting household composition, student information, current housing status and documentation, housing risk factors, immediate needs, and the family's plan for sustaining housing stability. Families are

asked to identify what financial resources they can contribute to their own plan, reinforcing the program's expectation of active family participation.

Families are also asked whether they wish to be connected to additional supports including case management, counseling, tutoring, and other wraparound services, and whether they consent to follow-up contact to discuss their needs, service updates, and any changes in their situation.

FAMILY COMMITMENTS

Participation in the Family Stabilization Project requires families to review and sign a Family Commitment and Acknowledgment Signature Page. This document sets out three core commitments that families agree to uphold as a condition of participation.

Commitment	Description
Develop a Family Stabilization Plan	The family will create and actively work toward a realistic plan to stabilize their household, addressing identified needs and goals.
Support Regular School Attendance	The family will ensure that enrolled students attend school regularly and on time, except in cases of illness or approved absences, and will communicate with the school as needed.
Responsible Use of Available Funds	Any provided funds will be used solely to support the family stabilization process and related needs that promote student well-being and academic success.

ONGOING SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-UP

Following enrollment, the program's goal is to conduct monthly follow-up with each family, or more frequently depending on the family's needs and their stabilization plan. Community Navigators maintain primary responsibility for this ongoing contact, coordinating with McKinney-Vento liaisons and community agency partners as needed. The family's plan remains the central reference point for all follow-up activity, with navigators monitoring progress toward the goals the family has set and addressing new needs as they arise.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Family Stabilization Project is supported by a network of community partners that extend the program's capacity to serve families with comprehensive, wraparound support. The Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico serves as fiscal agent for all four Flex Fund categories, providing the financial infrastructure necessary to process payments in a timely manner. Community agencies including Tresco, FYI, and MCH are engaged to provide extensive case management for families whose needs exceed what the McKinney-Vento liaisons can address alone. Additional community agencies are engaged as needed based on the specific circumstances of each family.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Family-Driven Stabilization Planning: The program's foundational commitment to family-driven planning distinguishes it from programs in which services are determined primarily by program staff. By placing the family at the center of plan development, the Family Stabilization Project positions the family's own goals and priorities as the basis for all resource and service decisions.

Individualized, Needs-Based Resource Allocation: The program's approach of assessing each family individually and tailoring support to their specific plan ensures that resources address the actual barriers a family faces rather than a

predetermined set of categories. The four-tier Flex Fund structure, combined with the flexibility built into Flex Fund IV and the ability to transfer funds between categories, creates a highly adaptive resource model that can respond to the real and varied needs of families experiencing homelessness.

Integrated Case Management and Community Coordination: The collaborative model involving Community Navigators, McKinney-Vento liaisons, and community agency partners creates a layered system of support that can scale to meet the intensity of need each family presents. Families with extensive case management needs are connected to specialized community organizations, while the navigators and liaisons maintain primary coordination and follow-up.

Proactive Student Identification and Outreach: The program's investment in extended outreach capacity through an additional hours agreement for McKinney-Vento staff reflects a commitment to identifying every eligible student and family, including those who have not yet been referred.

Fiscal Accountability Through an Independent Fiscal Agent: The use of the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico as an independent fiscal agent for the four Flex Funds provides a structured, accountable mechanism for resource disbursement. This arrangement separates program planning and case management functions from financial processing, creating an additional layer of oversight and ensuring that funds are disbursed in a timely and auditable manner consistent with program requirements.

EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY

Category	Amount
Flex 1: Gap Area Barriers	$96,000
Flex 2: Housing Subsidies	$388,000
Flex 3: Stabilization Essentials	$338,000
Flex 4: Food and Emergency Rent	$140,000
District Fund (Operations)	$376,200
Fiscal Agent Administration Fee	$46,640
Total	**$1,384,840**

DETAILED EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN BY FLEX FUND

Category	Number of Assists	Monetary Value
Flex Fund I — Gap Area Barriers		
Clothing and food	40	$30,000
Utility arrears	5	$2,000
Back rent	10	$28,000
Car repairs	12	$28,000
Gas cards	5	$1,000
Flex Fund II — Housing Subsidies		
Hotel / motel	8	$30,000
Back rent	21	$42,100

Application fee / first & last month's rent	25	$71,000
Substandard housing repairs	25	$200,000
Down payment on home	4	$27,000
Carry-over from Flex Fund I	—	$10,000
Flex Fund III — Stabilization Essentials		
Furniture (beds, mattresses, living room items)	80	$300,000
Appliances (stove, fridge, washer, dryer, sink)	80	$28,000
Housewares	80	$10,000
Flex Fund IV — Emergencies / Other		
Emergency rent, food, hotel stays, clothing, vehicle repairs, household appliances, deposits, beds	35	$60,000

FAMILIES SERVED

Category	Number Served
Families served	131
Adults served	250
Children served	357
Unaccompanied youth	6

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Category	Number of Families
Race / Ethnicity	
Hispanic	117
Non-Hispanic	3
African American	7
Native American	4
Primary Language	
English	104
Spanish only	25
Swahili	2
Family Structure	
Single-parent families	31

FAMILY STATUS

Families Served to Date	131
Doubled Up	58
Hotel/Motels	13
Shelters	7
Substandard	12
Accompanied Youth	84
Unaccompanied Youth	6

LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Among the most significant interventions undertaken during the project period was the effort to transition unaccompanied youth out of unstable, temporary living arrangements and into independent housing of their own. The program covered security deposits and first month's rent and furnished each residence with furniture and household starter kits, providing these students with a stable foundation from which to pursue post-secondary education. To sustain that stability through the summer months, the students are drawing upon their Guaranteed Payment for Attendance funds to meet rent and other essential expenses.

For program staff, among the most enduring aspects of the work was observing the transformation in families' living conditions. Navigators documented residences that had initially exhibited significant deficiencies, including holes in walls and flooring, missing windows, and the absence of electricity, air conditioning, a stove, and adequate drainage, and that were subsequently restored to safe, fully functional environments in which children could thrive. The families' accounts, and the depth of their gratitude, left a lasting impression upon the navigators who worked alongside them.

Family Voice - The theme expressed most consistently by participating families was one of profound gratitude, with many describing the assistance they received as almost surreal and scarcely believable. A number of these families had saved over extended periods without being able to overcome the obstacles confronting them. For many, the program represented a genuine fresh start, whether through a down payment on a new mobile home or the renovation of a previously substandard residence into safe and livable condition. Throughout the process, FSP navigators deliberately positioned families to take the lead in identifying and articulating their own needs and in directing how their households would be stabilized. This family-led approach strengthened participants' sense of ownership and made the work substantially more meaningful.

What Worked Well - Strong community partnerships were central to the program's success. The partnership with the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico proved especially instrumental; serving as fiscal agent, the Foundation supplied the practical tools, including checks and navigator purchasing cards, that made timely procurement possible. Navigators likewise cultivated valuable relationships with furniture retailers, landlords, contractors, and Tresco for case management and, above all, with the families themselves. Should the program continue in a future year, the district intends to sustain these practices and to develop additional community partnerships in order to expand the range of options available for stabilizing families. The program director further commends the dedication of the project team, whose sustained commitment made it possible to administer nearly $1.4 million in program funds, including roughly $960,000 in direct family assistance, between January and mid-June.

Areas for Improvement - The principal challenge encountered was time. Although funding was made available during the fall semester, in approximately November, the steps required to obtain board approval, process the necessary budget adjustment requests (BARs), and secure approval and budget authority from the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) meant that the program could not begin until January 2026. Once the program was operational and fully staffed, it proved highly successful in meeting participating families' needs, though the implementation window, running only from January through June 15, was considerably compressed. By the close of the first month the program had already enrolled approximately 100 families; with additional time, navigators could have engaged more intensively with each household.

The funding structure itself worked well. The use of an external fiscal agent to manage program funds was of substantial benefit, and the flexibility of the Flex Fund categories allowed the district to make locally informed decisions regarding family needs within the guidelines established by NMPED. The director's foremost recommendation for any future iteration is that funding be released by July 1, so that all program components can be in place by the start of August. An earlier release would afford the team a full school year to support families, to maintain consistent follow-up, and to confirm that each family has achieved stability before the project concludes. The program additionally recommends the adoption of a standardized data template, accompanied by clear guidance at the outset regarding the information that will need to be collected, in order to improve the efficiency of future reporting.

Key Takeaways

- Disburse program funding no later than July 1 to ensure that staffing, operational systems, and community partnerships are fully established before the school year begins.
- Authorize a full school-year implementation period to enable sustained, individualized engagement and consistent follow-up with each participating family.
- Allow sufficient lead time for board approval, budget adjustment requests, and NMPED budget authority so that operations may commence at the start of the year rather than mid-year.
- Preserve the established fiscal framework, including an independent fiscal agent and the flexibility of the Flex Fund categories, which enabled timely and locally informed spending decisions.
- Maintain and expand partnerships with landlords, contractors, furniture providers, and case-management agencies such as Tresco to broaden the housing and stabilization options available to families.
- Continue the family-led planning model, under which families direct their own stabilization with navigator support, to reinforce family ownership and engagement.
- Adopt a standardized data-collection template, with clear guidance provided at the outset regarding required information, to improve the consistency, administrative efficiency and establish uniform data expectations of future reporting.
- Standardize data collection across Family Stabilization sub-recipients to capture both participant outcomes and staff perspectives of program staff while maintaining the flexibility to evaluate unique, localized programming independently.
- Establish clear methodology for tracking output data and expenditures across all participating school districts to ensure comparison across sites, fiscal accountability and program transparency.

Family and Youth Stabilization Project · 2025–2026

Albuquerque Public Schools

APS McKinney-Vento Program · Albuquerque, New Mexico

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Element	Detail
Administering Organization	Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) APS McKinney-Vento Program
Program Type	Family and Youth Stabilization Initiative
Program Goal	Serve families of students enrolled in Albuquerque Public Schools
Average Award Per Family	Individualized based on youth and family need
Pilot End Date	End of School Year 2025–2026
Case Management Partners	Bernalillo County Housing, APS McKinney-Vento staff, and community partners
Student Population Served	Students enrolled in Albuquerque Public Schools through the APS McKinney-Vento Program

PROGRAM MODEL AND FAMILY-CENTERED PLANNING

Services are delivered through the FYSP stabilization model and are tailored to individual family needs, with financial assistance paired with coordinated case management and educational support. Service intensity varies by intervention: higher-touch case management is provided to families experiencing homelessness or repeated housing instability, while shorter-term stabilization supports are provided for eviction prevention cases. Case-management contact occurs at least twice weekly in alignment with program design, from the date of intake through the end of the current school year.

The program delivers four primary service types. Eviction prevention and rent assistance provides short-term financial assistance to prevent housing loss and maintain school stability. Child and youth stabilization support offer early intervention services coordinated with rent assistance and legal support. Stabilization essentials provide targeted support to help families secure or retain housing. Emergency and rapid rehousing support is coordinated between Bernalillo County Housing and APS McKinney-Vento staff for families who are unhoused or exiting shelter.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Family and Youth Stabilization Project is designed around collaboration between Albuquerque Public Schools, Bernalillo County, and community partners. Coordination between Bernalillo County Housing and APS McKinney-Vento staff is a specific feature of the program's emergency and rapid rehousing service component. The program also supports systems alignment and shared learning with other New Mexico school districts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Family and Youth Stabilization Project represents the expansion and refinement of a model that Albuquerque Public Schools developed and implemented over the past five years to support children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness. The project's purpose was to provide intensive, individualized support designed to address housing instability as a barrier to educational success and to improve educational outcomes through sustained family stabilization.

The project was originally supported through funding from Bernalillo County and transitioned in the 2025–2026 school year to funding administered through the New Mexico Public Education Department and the Department of Workforce Solutions, Office of Housing. Throughout its evolution, the project remained focused on the belief that educational stability and housing stability are deeply interconnected and that meaningful outcomes require sustained engagement with families.

Key components of the model included: (1) identifying students and families through proactive outreach early in the school year; (2) providing intensive case management services with a minimum of two contacts per week; (3) monitoring student attendance following enrollment support and transportation assistance provided under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; (4) connecting families to meaningful and relevant community resources through structured action plans designed to address the root causes of homelessness; and (5) maintaining support and re-engagement opportunities through the end of the school year in which housing stability was achieved.

The project demonstrated the value of intensive, relationship-based intervention and reinforced the importance of addressing housing instability as part of a comprehensive strategy to support student success.

UPDATED PROGRAM BUDGET

Budget Line Item	Amount
Staff	$932,920.15
Flex Funds I, II, III, and IV*	$1,608,562.00
Total	**$2,541,482.15**

**Flex Fund IV was not used due to the adjusted timeline.*

EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY

Category	Amount
Flex 1: Gap Area Barriers	$112,969.66
Flex 2: Housing Subsidies	$12,098.89
Flex 3: Stabilization Essentials	$945,554.79
Flex 4: Food and Emergency Rent	$0
District Fund (Operations)	$0*
Fiscal Agent Administration Fee	$0**
Total	**$1,070,623.34**

**All operations remained funded through our Title I, Part A.*

***APS has not received a final invoice with a fiscal agent administration fee.*

FAMILIES SERVED

During the reporting period, the program served 263 families, representing a total of 644 students.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Data not provided.

PROGRAM COMPLETION

For purposes of the Family and Youth Stabilization Project, successful completion was defined as achieving housing stabilization, no longer meeting the eligibility criteria for identification under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and maintaining stable housing status without re-identification for a period of two subsequent school years.

At this time, completion data is not yet available. Due to the timing of project implementation and the longitudinal nature of the completion criteria, sufficient time has not elapsed to determine whether participating families have maintained housing stability for the required two-year period. Long-term outcome monitoring will be necessary to accurately assess project completion rates and sustained impact.

FUND USAGE & FISCAL IMPACT

The delayed revision to the funding timeline affected project implementation and required APS to adjust the original service delivery plan. Because the approval of families was paused until the revised timeline was finalized, full implementation began later than anticipated. This created a shorter period for outreach, family engagement, and housing navigation activities.

The families enrolled in the project presented with significant housing needs, and many required intensive support to move toward housing stability. APS prioritized serving families already engaged in the process and worked to provide assistance within the time available. The shortened implementation period, however, limited the project's ability to serve the full number of families originally anticipated.

The delay also affected the project's ability to carry out the broader model as initially designed. Rather than having sufficient time for both immediate housing support and longer-term stabilization planning, staff had to focus on urgent family needs, landlord coordination, documentation, and direct housing-related assistance. Even within these constraints, APS continued to prioritize families with significant barriers and worked to preserve the intent of the project as much as possible.

Program operations continued to be funded through Title I, Part A, and district operational funds. Funding through the Flex Fund, in the categories of employment assistance, arrears, and local agent administration fees, has not yet been fully resolved.

QUALITATIVE DATA & FAMILY VOICE

The most significant theme that emerged from participant engagement was the value of addressing the root causes of housing instability rather than focusing exclusively on immediate housing barriers. Families responded positively to a model that emphasized relationship-building, individualized planning, and comprehensive support.

A particularly impactful example involved a single parent and child with a long history of homelessness and repeated housing loss. Despite previous engagement with support services, the family had been unable to overcome the cumulative financial barriers preventing long-term stability. Through the Family and Youth Stabilization Project, multiple obstacles were addressed simultaneously, including two outstanding arrears balances, move-in expenses, utility deposits, and forward rent assistance.

For the first time, the family was able to resolve barriers that had contributed to repeated housing instability. The outcome extended beyond financial assistance. It restored hope, strengthened the family's pathway toward stability, and demonstrated the effectiveness of combining intensive case management with targeted financial intervention.

Families consistently expressed appreciation for having a trusted staff member who took the time to understand their circumstances, identify underlying challenges, and develop solutions tailored to their specific needs. These experiences reinforced the importance of relationship-centered approaches and coordinated support systems when working with families experiencing homelessness.

STAFF REFLECTIONS

This semester was both humbling and instructive for staff. The needs within the community remain significant, and the opportunity to work alongside families experiencing homelessness reinforced both the importance and urgency of this work.

While the program was not an expansion of existing services, staff were deeply encouraged by the relationships they built with families while pursuing funding intended to support housing stability. Those connections strengthened trust, provided opportunities for meaningful advocacy, and reminded the team of the resilience that families demonstrate even in the face of extraordinary challenges.

At the same time, the implementation timeline highlighted important lessons about the limitations of short-term approaches. Staff witnessed firsthand why sustainable housing stabilization requires adequate time to develop individualized plans, implement supports, and work toward long-term outcomes. Due to capacity constraints, funding delays, and the complexity of program processes, the team was often unable to move at the pace families needed.

The cumulative effect of repeated delays required significant advocacy and frequent adjustments to plans that had already been established. In some cases, children and youth remained unable to move into housing, experienced eviction, or lost confidence in systems that were intended to help them. These outcomes were difficult for staff to witness and carried a significant emotional impact.

Although supporting students and families through housing instability remains central to the program's mission, this experience underscored the importance of streamlined processes, realistic implementation timelines, and coordinated partnerships. The semester strengthened the team's commitment to the work while also clarifying the conditions necessary for it to be effective and sustainable.

WHAT WORKED WELL

One of the project's greatest strengths was Albuquerque Public Schools' leadership in advocating for school districts to be included in housing stabilization efforts and in demonstrating the critical connection between housing stability and educational outcomes. APS helped establish and support a coalition of school districts committed to addressing homelessness through educational systems.

Strong partnerships with Santa Fe Public Schools, Las Cruces Public Schools, Bernalillo County, and numerous community organizations contributed to the development and pilot implementation of promising practices that can be replicated in future initiatives. These partnerships demonstrated the value of leveraging educational systems as early identification points for families experiencing housing instability and using intensive, school-based engagement to connect families with community resources.

Future efforts would benefit from maintaining this collaborative framework while strengthening coordination among education, housing, local government, and community partners. The project also reinforced the effectiveness of structured action planning, intensive case management, attendance monitoring, and ongoing follow-up after stabilization has been achieved.

The Family and Youth Stabilization Project reaffirmed the importance of timely implementation, streamlined administrative processes, and clear communication among funding agencies and implementation partners. Housing instability is often an immediate crisis, and delays in funding distribution or program activation can significantly affect families' ability to achieve and maintain stable housing.

The most significant challenge encountered during implementation was the uncertainty created by shifting timelines and funding revisions. These changes limited the project's ability to operate as originally designed, constrained service capacity, and reduced opportunities to build the long-term stabilization plans necessary for sustained outcomes. Staff devoted substantial effort to revising implementation strategies and advocating for continuity of services, time that otherwise would have been directed toward direct family support.

Should a similar opportunity arise in the future, APS recommends earlier coordination among funding entities, simplified administrative requirements, clearly established implementation timelines, and greater flexibility to address urgent family needs while maintaining accountability standards. Long-term stabilization initiatives are most effective when partners have adequate time to build relationships, develop individualized plans, and implement interventions before families experience additional housing crises.

Key Takeaways

- Continue advocacy work supporting school districts to be included in housing stabilization and demonstrating the critical connection between housing stability and educational outcomes.
- Disburse program funding no later than July 1 to ensure that staffing, operational systems, and community partnerships are fully established before the school year begins.
- Authorize a full school-year implementation period to enable sustained, individualized engagement and consistent follow-up with each participating family.
- Allow sufficient lead time for board approval, budget adjustment requests, and NMPED budget authority so that operations may commence at the start of the year rather than mid-year.
- Maintain and expand partnerships with landlords, contractors, furniture providers, and case-management agencies such as Tresco to broaden the housing and stabilization options available to families.
- Adopt a standardized data-collection template, with clear guidance provided at the outset regarding required information, to improve the consistency, administrative efficiency and establish uniform data expectations of future reporting.
- Standardize data collection across Family Stabilization sub-recipients to capture both participant outcomes and staff perspectives of program staff while maintaining the flexibility to evaluate unique, localized programming independently.
- Establish clear methodology for tracking output data and expenditures across all participating school districts to ensure comparison across sites, fiscal accountability and program transparency.

Community Connection

The Family Stabilization Program has had a substantial community-level impact by strengthening housing continuity, preserving neighborhood stability, and reinforcing local support systems during periods of crisis. A central outcome of the program is that it enables students and their families to remain in their original communities whenever possible, rather than being displaced due to eviction, housing instability, or financial shocks. This continuity reduces school mobility, protects peer relationships, and maintains access to established community supports, all of which are closely tied to stronger educational engagement and emotional well-being.

By prioritizing rapid housing stabilization, the program directly helps prevent forced displacement that often fragments both family systems and community networks. When families are able to stay in place or quickly regain stable housing within the same area, children are less likely to experience school disruption, transportation barriers, or the loss of trusted adult and peer relationships. This stability reinforces a sense of belonging and continuity, which is especially important for unaccompanied youth and families already navigating significant economic and social stressors.

The program also generates meaningful local economic and infrastructure impacts by intentionally directing funding toward community-based providers and service networks. Resources flow to local landlords, property owners, contractors, plumbers, electricians, and small businesses that are directly involved in stabilizing housing conditions. This includes emergency repairs, habitability improvements, and rapid-response services that not only resolve immediate housing crises but also strengthen the overall housing infrastructure within the community. In this way, stabilization dollars are reinvested locally, supporting both family well-being and community economic resilience.

In addition, the program strengthens community trust and relational networks by relying heavily on collaboration between schools, navigators, landlords, and service providers. These relationships function as informal but critical infrastructure, allowing for faster identification of needs and more coordinated responses. Over time, this builds a more connected ecosystem of support where community members and institutions work in alignment rather than isolation. Another important community impact is the reinforcement of neighborhood stability during periods of economic pressure. By preventing evictions and reducing residential turnover, the program helps maintain more stable school enrollment patterns and more consistent community engagement. This stability benefits not only the families served, but also the broader neighborhoods in which they live, reducing disruption in housing markets, school systems, and local support networks.

No Strings Attached

Ray Banegas, LCPS Program Manager

Many of the families Ray's team works with carry something into their first interactions with the program. It is a kind of careful guardedness, shaped by years of navigating systems that offered help with conditions attached. This has made many families feel that needing support was something to be ashamed of.

One mother said it out loud. Quietly, and with some hesitation, she told the team, "I feel like I am asking for too much." She was not asking for too much. She was asking for what her family needed. She had learned, somewhere along the way, to make herself smaller.

Ray speaks about this work through the lens of loving your neighbor as yourself. The program has supported families with furniture when they had been sleeping on the floor, with plumbing repairs when their homes were not safe, with the kinds of things that allow a family to live with dignity. These completed projects are not handouts. They are what it looks like to genuinely invest in another family's stability and believe that their wellbeing matters.

The families feel the difference. Some have brought food to the staff as a gesture of gratitude. Some have offered to find other ways to give something back. The team receives these gestures with warmth while gently reinforcing the truth at the center of the work: there is nothing to repay. The support is given freely, and it always will be. That

message, offered consistently and with care, is what begins to rebuild trust with the families Ray's team serves and ultimately with their entire community.

Ultimately, the program demonstrates that community impact is not limited to direct services delivered to families, but extends to the strengthening of local systems, relationships, and economies. By keeping families housed, connected, and engaged within their communities of origin, and by reinvesting resources into local service providers, the program reinforces both social and structural stability across Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe communities.

Quality-of-Life Improvements

Across APS, LCPS, and SFPS, the Family Stabilization Program has produced meaningful quality-of-life improvements for families and unaccompanied youth primarily through rapid, relational, and flexible stabilization supports. At a high level, the most significant improvements center on housing stability, basic needs access, living condition upgrades, and re-engagement with education once immediate crises are addressed.

A primary improvement has been housing stabilization and eviction prevention, where direct financial assistance, often covering rent arrears, deposits, and emergency payments, has allowed families to remain housed or secure new housing. In multiple cases, families on the brink of eviction or actively in court were able to avoid displacement when funding arrived in time, creating immediate relief and preventing homelessness. For many households, this was the difference between losing housing and maintaining stability for children and youth.

There have also been clear improvements in housing quality and safety, particularly through LCPS-supported interventions. Families living in substandard conditions experienced repairs such as plumbing restoration, mold remediation, electrical and heating fixes, roof repairs, and general habitability improvements. These changes directly improved health and safety outcomes, especially for households previously living without reliable plumbing, heat, or safe sleeping conditions.

Another major area of impact is access to basic household necessities and material stability. Across districts, families received essential items such as furniture, bedding, and household goods, which transformed empty or unstable living environments into functional homes. At APS, for example, coordinated efforts included delivering household items and responding to immediate needs, which helped families establish safe and dignified living spaces after long periods of instability or homelessness.

The program has also improved food security and health-related stability. APS partnerships with food banks and community groups expanded access to fresh and healthy food, moving beyond pantry staples toward more nutritious options. These supports contributed to reduced daily stress around food access and improved overall household functioning.

A key quality-of-life improvement is increased educational engagement and stability for children and youth. Once housing crises are stabilized, families report improved school attendance, reduced truancy, and greater ability to focus on educational needs. In some cases, students were successfully reconnected to school systems after periods of disengagement tied directly to housing instability.

There are notable improvements in family well-being, dignity, and reduced crisis burden. Families consistently report relief from constant housing insecurity, reduced stress, and increased ability to focus on long-term goals such as employment, education, and child development. The relational, responsive nature of the program, where staff, landlords, contractors, and community partners act quickly in coordination, has contributed to restoring a sense of stability and dignity during periods of crisis.

While the immediate, material successes of the Family Stabilization Program are quantifiable, the most profound quality-of-life improvements occur within the psychological and developmental trajectories of the children

served. Moving a child from housing insecurity to stability does not merely secure their housing or change their address; it fundamentally alters their sense of dignity, self-worth, and belonging.

The Gift of Going Back to School

Cristal Wilson, APS Program Director

A young child had not been in school. The family had been in contact with the program, and through that relationship, the team learned that this child, who deserved to be in a classroom, had not been enrolled. Homelessness had quietly stolen something that every child is entitled to.

Cristal stayed with it. She sent three emails and left two voicemails, and when she finally reached the right person, the child was approved for enrollment in an early childhood program. Within thirty minutes, a door that had been closed reopened.

The mother called throughout that day, just to share what was happening. Her child had made it to school. Her child was there, present, belonging somewhere. Each call was a mother letting someone know that it mattered, that the work had mattered, and that her family was beginning to move toward something more stable.

This family was also connected to three months of rental assistance. They are housed. They are engaged. And a child who had been kept from school by the weight of their family's circumstances is now where every child deserves to be.

When a school district, state agency, and local community converge to meet a child's housing needs, they deliver a resonant message: *you matter and you are seen*. The transition from a chaotic, unstable living situation to a functional home, symbolized by moving from eating on the floor to gathering around a dining table, or finally having a dedicated bed to sleep in, shifts a child's reality from survival to belonging. Within a culturally responsive framework, a house is merely a physical structure, but a home is a sanctuary of safety, identity and community care.

The long-term socio-educational impacts of this stabilization are profound. By mitigating the toxic stress of homelessness, the program alters the life course of these youth, fostering resilience and opening pathways to upward mobility. For these children, the ultimate metric of success is not just immediate school re-engagement, but the future realization of higher education, university graduation, and economic self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, this community-driven support frequently inspires a powerful cycle of reciprocity. Youth who experience the profound relief of coordinated community care are uniquely positioned to transition into the "helping fields" themselves, pursuing careers in social work, behavioral health, or financial planning for low-income families. Through this lens, the program does not just stabilize a temporary crisis; it invests in the future architects of community well-being, breaking generational cycles of poverty and replacing them with a legacy of stability and dignity.

Generational Impact

The Family Stabilization Program across APS, LCPS, and SFPS is producing early but meaningful generational impacts by interrupting cycles of housing instability that directly affect children, youth, and family systems over time. By preventing eviction, improving housing conditions, and stabilizing households during moments of crisis, the program is not only addressing immediate needs but also reducing the likelihood that children will experience repeated homelessness, chronic school disruption, or long-term instability that often carries across generations.

A significant generational impact is the strengthening of educational continuity for children and youth. When families are stabilized quickly, students are more likely to remain enrolled, maintain attendance, and avoid the compounding effects of school mobility. This stability supports improved academic engagement and reduces the long-term educational gaps that often emerge when housing insecurity forces repeated school changes or

disengagement. In cases where students were previously disconnected or experiencing truancy, stabilization has enabled re-entry into school systems and renewed participation in learning environments.

Another key impact is the break in intergenerational cycles of housing insecurity and poverty stress. Families who previously faced eviction, unsafe housing conditions, or prolonged shelter stays were able to secure stable housing environments through direct financial assistance and rapid response support. This stability reduces chronic stress within the household, which is closely linked to improved child development outcomes, emotional regulation, and long-term resilience. In many cases, families who had experienced repeated housing crises over years were able to establish a more stable baseline for the first time.

The program also contributes to long-term family system strengthening through improved access to resources and navigation supports. Families are being connected not only to housing assistance but also to food supports, financial literacy resources, employment navigation, and community-based services. These connections build capacity within households to independently manage future challenges, reducing reliance on crisis-based interventions over time and increasing self-sufficiency across generations.

There is also an emerging cultural and relational generational impact centered on trust and help-seeking behavior. In communities where asking for assistance may feel difficult or culturally discouraged, the program's relational approach, grounded in dignity, responsiveness, and reciprocity, has helped normalize help-seeking as an act of care rather than burden. This shift is reinforced when families express gratitude through engagement, gifts, or sustained connection, reflecting strengthened trust between institutions and communities. Over time, this may influence how future generations perceive and access support systems.

Solidarity, Not Charity
Ivan Cornejo, Adelante

Ivan comes to this work with something that cannot be taught in a training. He has experienced housing instability himself. When he sits with a family, he is not observing their circumstances from a distance. He understands, in a real and personal way, what it means to be where they are.

That understanding shapes everything about how his team at SFPS approaches their work. When families need to purchase household items, the team builds online shopping carts together and then steps back, allowing families to make their own selections, at their own pace, without anyone standing over them or watching what they choose. It is a practice rooted in the belief that autonomy and dignity do not disappear because a family is experiencing hardship. They are honored, especially then.

Families have responded to this care with care of their own. Mothers have brought meals. They have offered to help in any way they can. They have looked for ways to express what the support has meant to them. Ivan’s team receives these expressions of gratitude as what they are: the natural response of people who have been met with genuine relationship, not just services.

Ivan is clear and consistent in how he names the work. It is not charity. It is not a favor being done for people who are less fortunate. It is solidarity. It is stability. It is working alongside families, with full respect for who they are and what they are capable of, so that they can move toward the lives they are building. That, he believes, is what this work is for.

Finally, the program's most profound generational effect is the restoration of stability during critical developmental periods. When housing, food, and basic needs are stabilized, caregivers are better able to focus on parenting, employment, and long-term planning, while children experience safer, more predictable home environments. These conditions are foundational to breaking cycles of instability and supporting healthier developmental trajectories that extend beyond the immediate crisis period into long-term family outcomes.

Filling the Gaps Through Relationship, Cultural Knowledge, and Practice-Based Expertise: *The Building Bridges Approach to Family Stabilization*

In the 2025-2026 school year, Santa Fe Public Schools received dedicated support through its Adelante Program to expand the Building Bridges Project through the Family Stabilization initiative for students and families experiencing homelessness under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Building Bridges is a structured program with clear eligibility, participation, and documentation requirements. Each family develops an individualized Family Plan with an assigned Family Support Specialist, completes financial education, a family development activity, and maintains a 90 percent monthly school attendance rate for its children. With the funding allocated during the 2025-2026 school year, participating families were eligible to receive up to $11,000 in individualized stabilization support. Beyond these formal program elements, one of Building Bridges' most significant strengths was the way Adelante staff used community relationships, lived experience, cultural knowledge, and practice-based judgment to shape a family stabilization approach that reached beyond conventional school-based service models.

The Building Bridges Project positioned school-based family support as an essential part of housing stabilization, recognizing that students' educational stability and family housing stability are deeply connected. During the program's first reporting period, Building Bridges served 93 families across a range of housing circumstances, including 47 families who were doubled up, 31 living in substandard housing, 4 staying in hotels or motels, and 2 staying in shelters. These numbers show both the reach of the program and the complexity of the work. Adelante's Family Support Specialists supported families navigating housing instability while also addressing school attendance, family planning, and other McKinney-Vento-related needs. Their work required more than procedural compliance. It required trust, local knowledge, cultural understanding, and careful professional judgment.

Adelante's team met the needs of those they served through a partner network that functioned as a practical stabilization strategy rather than a simple referral pathway. Family Support Specialists connected families to financial education, counseling, legal support, wellness resources, and material assistance based on each household's priorities, language needs, and immediate barriers. Families were not treated as cases to process, but as households with specific histories, strengths, barriers, and goals. Specialists also used professional intuition as a form of experience-based judgment, applying their knowledge of families, community systems, and local resources to assess immediate needs, identify appropriate supports, and determine when trust-building, flexibility, or urgency was necessary (Seppälä, 2024). Biweekly check-ins provided structured opportunities to revisit each family's plan, adjust supports, and respond to changing circumstances over the course of participation.

The Building Bridges model stands alone as a promising practice because it gives structure to the relational work Adelante staff were already doing with families. The model combines school attendance, financial education, family development, individualized planning, and direct stabilization support, but its value is not found in those components alone. Its value is found in how those components are held together through the relationship between the family and the Family Support Specialist. The Family Plan asks families to identify the barriers that matter most to their own safety, stability, and ability to move forward, while also giving staff a practical way to sequence support, clarify expectations, and respond to changing circumstances. In this sense, the model does more than distribute resources. It creates a disciplined process for translating trust, cultural knowledge, and practice-based judgment into concrete stabilization support. The fact that Adelante provides services bilingually in English and Spanish is central to this process. Language access is not a secondary accommodation in a relationship-based model. It is part of how trust is built, how expectations are understood, and how families are able to name their needs without being forced to navigate support through a language barrier. Bilingual accessibility therefore strengthens the very conditions the model depends on: communication, dignity, follow-through, and shared understanding between families and staff.

The expertise Adelante staff brought to Building Bridges should be understood as a core feature of the model. Their work reflects forms of knowledge increasingly recognized across health, social service, and homelessness

systems, including cultural humility, lived expertise, relational trust, and practice-based judgment. Cultural humility emphasizes self-reflection, respect for the expertise of the people being served, power-sharing, and continued learning rather than mastery of a fixed set of cultural facts (Lekas et al., 2020). This framework aligns with the way Adelante's Family Support Specialists worked with families, drawing on knowledge of Santa Fe's communities, languages, relationships, and local systems rather than applying a generic service template. The homelessness field has reached a similar conclusion about lived expertise. Research indicates that lived expertise can strengthen policy and practice when it is meaningfully included, and national homelessness work emphasizes that people with direct experience often identify barriers, service gaps, and practical solutions that administrative systems alone may overlook (Kopec & Smith, 2024; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2025).

The professional judgment exercised by Family Support Specialists is also reflected in related work on decision-making and homelessness response. Experienced practitioners can use intuition alongside deliberate analysis when responding to complex situations (Seppälä, 2024). Public health commentary on homelessness similarly emphasizes data, collaboration, listening to lived experience, and meeting people where they are as elements of more durable responses (Roeder, 2026). Taken together, this body of work suggests that Adelante's approach was not informal or incidental. It reflected a form of practice-based expertise that formal training pathways have only begun to recognize.

Early implementation data suggest that Building Bridges is reaching families with significant stabilization needs while maintaining strong participant confidence in the support provided. Through the quarter ending May 30, 2026, the program delivered 399 individualized assists totaling approximately $670,491.00 in direct family assistance. Housing stability represented the largest area of support, with 146 assists totaling approximately $283,000.00. Family feedback also points to strong early trust in the model. As of May 2026, all 65 early survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program was helpful, and 100% percent agreed that they would recommend it to other families in similar circumstances. These early results are important not only because of the volume of assistance delivered, but because they reflect a school-based team translating relational, cultural, and practice-based expertise into concrete stabilization support for families experiencing homelessness.

Building Bridges offers New Mexico a concrete example of how youth and family homelessness responses can be strengthened when immediate financial resources are organized through relationship, cultural knowledge, lived experience, bilingual accessibility, and sustained community-based practice. The success of the Building Bridges program shows that this kind of knowledge-sharing is not incidental to effective service delivery. It reflects longstanding community practices of care, trust, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. Building Bridges demonstrates that family stabilization is strongest when formal resources are paired with the community-based expertise of those closest to the families being served, and when families can participate in a process that is accessible, understandable, and responsive to their lived realities. For this reason, the model warrants formal evaluation as a Promising Practice, with attention to how Family Support Specialists identify family priorities, build trust across language and cultural contexts, activate trusted relationships, sequence supports, and adapt assistance as circumstances change. Adelante's work should be studied not only because it is promising, but because it offers a practical example of how New Mexico can build homelessness responses from the knowledge, relationships, languages, and cultural strengths already present in its communities.

Recommendations for Future Work

Calculating Through Preparedness

Implementing standardized budget forecasting and spend-down scaling tools will enable the program to more accurately align financial resources with participant enrollment over time. By introducing structured models that project expenditures against phased enrollment targets, the program can better anticipate funding needs, avoid under- or over-utilization of funds, and make informed decisions about when to onboard new participants. This approach replaces reactive decision-making with data-driven planning, improving both fiscal stability and program impact while supporting long-term sustainability.

Alignment with National Best Practices
• Reflects common practices in public sector and grant-funded programs
• Incorporates multi-year financial modeling and scenario planning
• Connects enrollment projections directly to cost and funding curves
• Supports compliance with expectations for transparency and accountability
• Mirrors approaches used in federal and state-administered initiatives
Key Advantages
• Standardization improves clarity, coordination, and confidence in program management.
• Preparedness: Provides clear visibility into timing and pace of fund utilization
• Program Utilization: Enables proactive enrollment decisions based on budget performance
• Enhanced efficiency: Creates consistency across teams through shared tools and assumptions
• Better outcomes: Strengthens reporting with data-backed projections
• Greater accountability Enhances credibility with stakeholders and funding partners
Implementation Considerations
• Careful planning and ongoing management will be key to successful adoption.
• Select or design tools that balance rigor with ease of use
• Define and regularly validate key assumptions (e.g., per-participant cost, enrollment pace, attrition)
• Provide staff training and support change management efforts
• Establish a regular cadence for reviewing projections vs. actuals
• Build flexibility to adjust assumptions as program conditions evolve

Evaluation and Strategic Direction

To optimize program efficacy, fiscal accountability, and cross-site evaluation, the Family Stabilization Program must transition towards a unified, rigorous evaluation framework that balances regional flexibility with systemic standardization across participating school districts. The program should adopt a standardized data-collection template from the onset along with explicit compliance guidance. This process will eliminate administrative redundancies, establish uniform data expectations, and significantly improve reporting efficiency.

Drawing from successful pilot components, a collection of multi-dimensional data across all sub-recipients is needed. Specifically, it should replicate the comprehensive, multi-stakeholder feedback model tested during the project phase by one school district, which captured the specific impacts of the program on students, parents, and staff. By standardizing this approach, the program can capture qualitative impacts alongside quantitative participant outcomes while preserving the autonomy needed to evaluate unique localized programming independently.

Finally, establishing a transparent, uniform methodology for tracking output data and line-item fiscal expenditures across school districts is paramount. All districts should standardize the granular budgeting model providing a detailed breakdown of services rendered per household. Data collection should account for the number of families served, the total number of children impacted (including the siblings of the primary student), and the specific counts of McKinney-Vento eligible students and unaccompanied youth. This rigorous tracking will not only facilitate accurate cross-site comparative analysis but will also reinforce fiscal accountability and program transparency, clearly demonstrating the programmatic return on investment to the state agency.

Alignment with National Best Practices
• Standardized data-collection templates
• Implement multi-stakeholder data collection
• Formalize output and demographics
• Create systems for line-item budget monitoring
Key Advantages
• Provide a holistic and comprehensive narrative of success
• Capture systemic bottlenecks that data points alone miss
• Validates lived experience
• Captures the scope of community impact by capturing the entire population served e.g. sibling
• Allows leadership to identify cost-efficiencies and identify interventions that yield highest impact
• Restructures evaluation around local realities
Implementation Considerations
• Requires a collaborative initial design phase with all districts
• Includes clear onboarding training to prevent inconsistent data collection
• Evaluation and data collection must be trauma-informed and will require mandatory metrics

Future Partnerships; Local, State, and National Models

National Model: Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) Program

To improve outcomes for students experiencing homelessness, the program should redefine the McKinney-Vento Liaison role to incorporate structured, housing-focused case management aligned with national best practices. While current requirements ensure compliance with identification and enrollment mandates, leading models emphasize a more proactive role in stabilizing housing as a foundation for educational success. In New Mexico, current McKinney-Vento liaison expectations are largely compliance-driven and are often implemented with minimal dedicated training, limited ongoing technical assistance, and no formalized expectations or infrastructure to support housing-focused case management functions. As a result, responsibilities related to housing navigation, landlord engagement, and stabilization are inconsistently applied and not systemically supported across districts. Expanding the liaison function in a standardized and well-supported way would address these gaps, better connect families to housing resources, reduce the duration of homelessness, and improve student stability and engagement. School districts would benefit from the development of a clearly defined, consistently resourced position that includes formal training, structured expectations, and operational support to ensure effective implementation and sustainability.

Key Components of the Enhanced and Defined Liaison Role

Housing First Orientation
• Prioritize rapid connection to stable housing as the primary intervention
• Minimize preconditions for assistance, recognizing that housing stability supports educational continuity
• Align school-based efforts with community housing systems using Housing First principles
Low Barrier Approach
• Reduce administrative and programmatic barriers to accessing services and supports
• Streamline eligibility, documentation, and enrollment processes
• Ensure families can access assistance regardless of credit, income variability, or prior housing history
Housing-Focused Case Management
• Transition from primarily compliance-based duties to ongoing, individualized case management
• Develop housing stabilization plans with families, including clear goals and timelines
• Coordinate closely with local housing providers, shelters, and social service agencies
• Track progress toward permanent housing, not just service delivery
Landlord Engagement
• Establish and maintain relationships with local landlords willing to rent to program participants
• Serve as a liaison between families and property owners to address concerns and support tenancy success
• Create a small, reliable network of housing partners to expand placement options
Landlord Incentives
• Utilize flexible funding to reduce perceived risk for landlords
• Offer incentives such as damage mitigation funds, signing bonuses, or short-term guarantees
• Position the program as a stable and supportive partner to encourage landlord participation
Direct Financial Assistance
• Provide targeted, flexible financial support to address immediate housing barriers (e.g., deposits, arrears, short-term rental assistance)
• Align assistance with case management plans to support rapid stabilization
• Ensure funds are deployed quickly and strategically to prevent prolonged homelessness

Role and Responsibilities

The McKinney-Vento Liaison role should be expanded beyond compliance to include housing-focused case management that actively supports student and family stabilization. In addition to ensuring identification, enrollment, and access to educational services, the liaison would play a central role in helping families secure and maintain housing, coordinating supports across systems, and aligning resources to reduce the duration of homelessness. This approach reflects national best practices by integrating school-based supports with housing navigation, low-barrier service delivery, and strategic use of financial assistance—recognizing that housing stability is foundational to educational success.

Key Areas of Responsibilities
• Compliance & Access: Ensure identification, immediate enrollment, transportation, and removal of school-related barriers in alignment with McKinney-Vento requirements
• Housing-Focused Case Management: Conduct needs assessments, develop stabilization plans, and provide ongoing, goal-oriented support to secure and maintain housing
• Housing Navigation: Assist families in identifying, applying for, and accessing viable housing options while coordinating with shelters and community providers
• Landlord Engagement: Build relationships with landlords, mediate tenancy issues, and create a network of housing partners to expand placement opportunities
• Flexible Financial Assistance: Coordinate and deploy targeted funds (e.g., deposits, rent, utilities) to remove immediate housing barriers and support stabilization
• Cross-System Coordination & Outcomes: Partner with local systems such as the Continuum of Care, track housing and student stability outcomes, and align services to improve both housing and educational success

Servant Leadership, Fiduciary Responsibility, and the Imperative of Systemic Community Change

Governance, at its most principled level, is an act of service. The authority entrusted to public officials and institutional leaders does not belong to those who hold it. It belongs to the people and communities on whose behalf it is exercised. This understanding is not merely aspirational. It is a legal and ethical foundation grounded in the doctrine of fiduciary governance. Miller and Gold (2015) distinguish between two types of fiduciary mandates: service mandates, which bind a fiduciary to the interests of specific, identifiable persons, and governance mandates, which bind a fiduciary to abstract purposes on behalf of collectivities. Public offices, they argue, are best understood through the lens of fiduciary governance. The official is charged not with advancing personal interests or even the interests of a narrow constituency, but with pursuing purposes constitutive of the broader community. Loyalty, in this framework, is owed to those purposes and, through them, to the people those purposes exist to serve. For elected officials, administrators, and civic leaders, this means that power is not a possession. It is a trust, and that trust carries with it a non-negotiable obligation to remain accountable to the communities whose collective well-being the institution was created to advance (Miller & Gold, 2015).

Servant leadership, as a practice and as a philosophy, is the most direct human expression of that fiduciary obligation. Conceptualized by Robert Greenleaf and developed substantially in subsequent scholarship, servant leadership is distinguished from other models by one foundational reorientation: the leader serves first. Unlike transformational leadership, which centers organizational outcomes and leader vision, servant leadership prioritizes the growth, well-being, and empowerment of those being led (Saavedra et al., 2025). A systematic review of servant leadership across professional contexts identifies authenticity, humility, integrity, compassion, responsibility, and active listening as the defining characteristics of servant leaders, and documents their positive association with psychological safety, trust, creativity, collaboration, and organizational effectiveness (Saavedra et al., 2025). The research further demonstrates that servant leadership functions not merely as a management style but as an ethical posture. It is characterized by what scholars describe as an altruistic vocation and an intrinsic motivation toward service. These are not peripheral qualities of effective leadership. They are its core. For public officials and community leaders, adopting the principles of servant leadership is not a philosophical preference. It is the behavioral operationalization of the fiduciary duty they have already assumed upon taking office.

The Structural Dimensions of Partnership: Leaders, Communities, and Those They Serve

Effective governance cannot be accomplished from a distance. The research literature on community change is unambiguous: public health initiatives, educational reforms, and community development efforts guided by genuine community insight are substantially more likely to produce sustainable change and improved outcomes than those designed and imposed from positions of institutional authority without meaningful community participation (Adabanya et al., 2023). Community engagement, properly understood, is not a consultation exercise or a public relations function. It is a process of building authentic relationships, collecting information through respectful and reciprocal dialogue, and ensuring that those most affected by decisions have a substantive role in shaping them (Adabanya et al., 2023). This distinction carries weight in New Mexico, where communities shaped by histories of displacement, persistent poverty, and systemic under-investment have experienced governance too often as something done to them rather than with them.

Community engagement research points to two structural conditions that can weaken collective action, community self-determination, and long-term stability. These conditions include the displacement and fragmentation associated with gentrification and the persistent disconnect between local communities and the institutions that make decisions affecting their lives (Adabanya et al., 2023). When long-established residents are displaced and local organizations are weakened or dissolved, the social fabric of the community is damaged. Trust networks collapse, mutual aid systems are disrupted, and the political capital communities have built over time is diminished. The disconnect between communities and policymaking institutions does not simply create administrative inefficiency. It produces harm. Collective power weakens, civic engagement declines, and the ability of communities to advocate for their own well-being is undermined. Within a fiduciary governance framework, servant leaders have an obligation to recognize these dynamics and actively work against them. Their responsibility is not only to respond after crises have already harmed communities, but to help build and protect the structural conditions that allow communities to develop, exercise, and sustain their own collective strength (Adabanya et al., 2023).

Partnership between leaders and communities must therefore be structural, not episodic. It requires creating durable mechanisms for co-design, shared governance, and mutual accountability. It requires that communities, particularly those most historically marginalized, not be positioned as passive beneficiaries of programs designed elsewhere, but as active architects of the systems that govern their lives. Adabanya et al. (2023) describe the family unit as society's most fundamental building block and underscore the importance of collective unity, beginning at the individual level and extending through the family and into the broader community. Leaders who understand this dynamic serve not by displacing community capacity but by protecting it, investing in it, and holding themselves accountable to it. The community is not a problem to be solved. It is the source of the knowledge, the strength, and the legitimacy that makes genuine change possible.

Young People as Experts: Schools as Sites for Change

No dimension of servant leadership in the public sector is more consequential than the relationship between institutions and children. In New Mexico, the stakes of this relationship are not abstract. Following the landmark *Yazzie and Martinez v. State of New Mexico* ruling, courts found that the state had violated children's constitutional right to a sufficient education, citing persistently low graduation rates, poor academic proficiency, and high rates of college remediation, particularly among Native American students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families (Gagnon, 2024; Oakes et al., 2020). The court's finding was not simply an indictment of test scores. It was a recognition that the educational system, as it had been designed and resourced, had systematically failed the communities it was most obligated to serve. That failure was not incidental. It was structural.

The Learning Policy Institute's study of New Mexico's educational system situates this structural failure within a broader social and economic context. In 2018, seventy-five percent of New Mexico students qualified for federally subsidized meals. More than one in ten children lived in extreme poverty, defined as household incomes below half of the federal poverty line, and thirty-five percent lived in households where no parent had secure employment (Oakes et al., 2020). The report's central finding is direct and unambiguous: children and young

people who face barriers to school success from poverty and marginalization are the norm in New Mexico, not the exception. The state must therefore design its educational system with their diverse needs at the center, rather than treating those needs as special circumstances requiring accommodation at the periphery (Oakes et al., 2020). This is not a technical recommendation. It is a moral and fiduciary imperative. A system designed for the most vulnerable will, by construction, serve everyone better. A system designed without them will serve no one justly.

The response to *Yazzie/Martinez* offers a concrete model for what servant leadership in partnership with communities can produce. Rather than imposing standardized compliance mandates, New Mexico's Public Education Department, in partnership with Future Focused Education and community organizations, developed approaches to student assessment and educational design that honor the cultural and linguistic strengths of students rather than requiring students to abandon those strengths as a precondition for academic recognition (Gagnon, 2024). Innovation Zones were created to give districts the flexibility to design learning experiences that are culturally responsive, student-centered, and rooted in local context. Critically, the problem statement guiding reform was developed through direct engagement with students themselves, particularly those who had not found success in traditional educational models. Empathy interviews with diverse groups of high school students yielded a formulation that captures both the failure and the possibility: New Mexico students need a more expansive learning and assessment system that honors their cultural and linguistic strengths while providing feedback and engaging opportunities, allowing them to take ownership of their learning, build strong identities, and see a rich future ahead (Gagnon, 2024).

What students expressed in those interviews was not complaint. It was expertise. Young people participating in the EdUprising conference articulated with clarity what was missing from their educational experience and what they needed. One student stated that teachers consistently underestimate students, and that students know far more about the world than adults give them credit for (Gagnon, 2024). Another noted that New Mexico has abundant resources that students simply do not know about, pointing to systemic failures of information and access rather than failures of student capacity. These are not anecdotes. They are data, and data of a kind that institutional leaders rarely prioritize. Treating children and youth as lived experience experts is not a rhetorical gesture. It is an epistemological commitment, an acknowledgment that the knowledge required to build effective and equitable systems does not reside exclusively in credentialed adults in positions of institutional authority, but is distributed throughout the community, including its youngest members. Servant leaders who take this seriously do not simply create spaces for student voice. They redesign systems in response to what students tell them.

Gagnon (2024) identifies a feature of the New Mexico model that is particularly instructive for leaders committed to lasting systemic change: the deliberate avoidance of top-down mandates in favor of community stewardship. The court provided a mandate, the legislature provided funding, and the nonprofit intermediary lifted up community priorities and offered support, but none of these entities prescribed the specific steps that communities should take. By allowing communities to hold and steward changes, the model creates innovations that have a genuine chance of being durable and sustainable even in the face of leadership transitions and electoral cycles. This approach honors all three levels of change simultaneously: the individual student experience (micro level), the school and community partnerships that make support possible (mezzo level), and the state policy environment that creates space for local innovation (macro level). When these three systems align rather than work in isolation, young people experience continuity of support. This is servant leadership applied at a systems level. The leader's job is not to author the solution. The leader's job is to create the conditions, protect the space, and remain accountable to the communities whose work makes change real.

This servant leadership posture extends across multiple systems and sectors. When nonprofits receive support from government and private funders, the role of those funders is not to prescribe organizational priorities but to strengthen the nonprofit's capacity to set its own direction and serve its communities with integrity and authenticity. This means honoring the organizational knowledge and intergenerational wisdom that nonprofit leaders and frontline staff carry. The same principle applies to building capacity in leadership and frontline providers. The work is not to impose new curricula or compliance frameworks, but to invest in the people who understand local context, trust relationships, and the practical realities of their work. It means recognizing that

experienced providers are carriers of knowledge earned through years of showing up, and that this wisdom, passed down and built over time, is as essential as any credential. In evaluation, servant leadership means commissioning evaluations designed to illuminate what communities need most, not simply to demonstrate compliance or justify existing programs. In settings as challenging as domestic violence shelters and emergency response systems, servant leadership means ensuring that the frontline workers who carry the most difficult work have the resources, the decision-making authority, and the relational support they need to respond with full humanity rather than merely following procedures. This is not a soft practice. It is a structural commitment rooted in the understanding that relationships are the infrastructure on which sustainable change rests, and that the people closest to the work must be trusted, resourced, and held in genuine partnership. In each of these contexts (nonprofit support, capacity building, evaluation, shelter operations, and emergency response) the underlying commitment is the same: create the conditions, protect the space, and remain accountable to the people and communities doing the essential work.

Cultural Relevance as a Non-Negotiable Leadership Obligation

Cultural relevance in governance and educational leadership is not achieved through mission statements, symbolic acknowledgments of diversity, or advisory structures that do not meaningfully influence decision-making. It requires a deeper shift in authority, legitimacy, and design. Leaders must be willing to examine whose knowledge shapes policy, whose lived experience is treated as evidence, and whose priorities determine what systems are built to accomplish. In New Mexico's schools and communities, this means Native American students, English learners, and students from low-income and rural families cannot be treated as populations to be accommodated at the margins of a system designed around different assumptions. Their needs, strengths, languages, histories, and aspirations must be central to the design of the system itself. This is consistent with the call for New Mexico to build its educational system around the diverse needs of students of color and students from low-income families, who represent most of the state's student population, rather than treating those needs as supplemental concerns (Oakes et al., 2020).

Servant leadership is essential to this responsibility because it requires leaders to approach communities with humility, accountability, and a willingness to listen before prescribing solutions. In historically marginalized communities, authentic partnership is not possible when leaders define success only through institutional metrics or make decisions without meaningful accountability to the people most affected by those decisions. Servant leadership depends on the quality of the relationship between leaders and those they serve, including the degree to which leaders include followers, customers, and communities in the work of change (Saavedra et al., 2025). In public governance, this relationship is not merely organizational. It is fiduciary, moral, and practical. Funding decisions made at the macro level determine which resources reach communities, but their true impact is felt at the micro level by individuals and families. Community organizations at the mezzo level often serve as the connective tissue that translates policy into lived experience. Leaders who exercise authority over communities without genuine accountability to those communities are not practicing servant leadership, regardless of the language used to describe their work.

Building culturally relevant partnerships among government, schools, families, and communities also requires sustained investment in the relational infrastructure that makes cooperation possible. Community engagement strengthens trust, social cohesion, communication, collective problem-solving, and the capacity of communities to influence the systems that govern their lives (Adabanya et al., 2023). For public officials and institutional leaders, this means investing not only in programs and services, but also in the networks, relationships, and community-based organizations through which people develop and exercise collective power. When government agencies and private funders fail to adequately support this mezzo-level infrastructure, the consequences are not abstract. Social capital weakens, trust erodes, and the bridge between institutional systems and the people they are meant to serve begins to deteriorate. The result is greater isolation precisely where connection is most needed. Cultural relevance, therefore, is not an optional leadership value. It is a governance obligation necessary for systems to function with legitimacy, equity, and lasting impact.

Toward a Framework of Shared Accountability and Collective Purpose

The transformational change required to build equitable and effective systems in New Mexico cannot be accomplished by any single actor, within any single political cycle, or through any single program. This work requires sustained commitment across political transitions, transparent decision-making, and meaningful engagement with educators, community members, families, youth, and other stakeholders (Oakes et al., 2020). The scale of the work requires shared accountability, collective purpose, and a willingness to protect long-term community commitments from the instability of short-term political timelines.

There is also a crucial truth that helps explain why this work is possible in New Mexico: communities have always known that progress happens at the pace of relationship. This is not a limitation. It is cultural wisdom. Practices that are not culturally grounded, that treat relationship as secondary to process or attempt to impose change without genuine partnership, do more than fail to work. They diminish the knowledge, identity, and lived experience that communities carry. They overlook the intergenerational understanding that has sustained New Mexico's communities over time: meaningful change moves through trust, decisions made in dialogue carry authority, and the durability of any initiative depends on the strength of the relationships that hold it.

This responsibility is especially important in governance. A fiduciary mandate does not belong to a single officeholder or administration. It persists over time, even as the individuals who occupy positions of authority change (Miller & Gold, 2015). In New Mexico, that obligation is inseparable from cultural practice. It requires leaders to recognize that the authority entrusted to them belongs to the communities they serve, and that relationship is not incidental to accountability. Relationship is the structure through which accountability becomes real.

This obligation also requires leaders to understand that every financial decision made at the macro level of governance moves through community organizations at the mezzo level and ultimately affects the individuals and families at the micro level those funds are intended to serve. A check cannot be written responsibly without understanding its impact on the ground. Like an acequia that carries water to many households, relationships carry the trust and mutual responsibility that allow a system to function and sustain itself. When those channels of relationship are neglected or broken, the entire system becomes fragile, regardless of what policies exist on paper.

Servant leadership offers a practical expression of this responsibility. Leaders who understand their role as service rather than possession show up consistently in the communities they serve, building connection with care, humility, and positive regard. They seek guidance from elders, families, youth, community members, and seasoned practitioners, honoring the wisdom that has been built and preserved across generations. They create space for the voices and leadership of those closest to the work. They ensure that decisions are shaped through genuine dialogue and collective discernment rather than top-down directives. They are not the institution. They are its current stewards.

This is the vision that unifies servant leadership, fiduciary responsibility, and systemic community change in New Mexico. It is a vision of governance grounded in relationship and cultural commitment. It understands partnership as a structural responsibility, not a programmatic add-on. It recognizes communities, including their children and youth, as legitimate authors of the systems that shape their lives. Most importantly, it recognizes communities themselves, their wisdom, networks, relationships, and capacity for collective action, as the wellspring of sustainable change. Leaders who serve with integrity, hold authority as a trust, and remain accountable to the communities they serve do not simply produce better outcomes. They help build the conditions in which those outcomes become possible.

Expanding Capacity in New Mexico

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A National Problem: Cold-Related Risk Among People Experiencing Homelessness

Winter weather-related mortality among persons experiencing homelessness constitutes a preventable and ongoing public health crisis with documented consequences across every region of the United States. Hypothermia, defined clinically as a reduction of core body temperature below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, represents one of the most acute environmental health risks confronting the unsheltered population. The National Coalition for the Homeless has documented that approximately 700 individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness are killed annually from hypothermia in the United States (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2014). More recent provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that Hypothermia mortality has also risen sharply across the U.S. population as a whole: provisional CDC data record approximately 2,520 hypothermia-related deaths among Americans in 2023, a 35% increase over 2014 levels (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). The intersection of increasing unsheltered homelessness with aging demographics among the population experiencing homelessness further compounds this risk, as older adults are physiologically less capable of thermoregulatory compensation. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council notes that hypothermia remains a leading, critical, and preventable cause of injury and death among persons experiencing homelessness, compounded by the reality that 44% of the nation's population experiencing homelessness remains unsheltered at any given time (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2022). Cold-weather response systems across the country remain fragmented, as few municipalities have comprehensive cold-weather emergency plans, and many existing protocols operate only under arbitrarily determined temperature thresholds, leaving significant service gaps even in conditions capable of inducing hypothermia (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2014).

Cold-Related Risk Among People Experiencing Homelessness in New Mexico

Within New Mexico, hospital-based surveillance data demonstrate that cold-related illness and death among persons experiencing homelessness represent a measurable and recurring burden on the state's health care system. A January 2025 epidemiological report published by the New Mexico Department of Health analyzed five years of hospital records spanning 2019 to 2023, identifying 30,882 unique patients with at least one record indicating homelessness across participating non-federal facilities (Peterson & Pell, 2025). Among those patients, 488 discharge records indicated death, and of those, 17 individuals died specifically of a cold-related illness, including frostbite, hypothermia, or cold exposure (Peterson & Pell, 2025). The mean age at death among decedents experiencing homelessness was 52 years, a figure that underscores the severity of premature mortality associated with housing instability and winter exposure. The New Mexico Department of Health report explicitly acknowledges that these cold-related death figures likely undercount the true scope of the problem, given the exclusion of Indian Health Service and Veterans Affairs facilities from the surveillance dataset, as well as the persistent challenge of capturing homelessness status in standard clinical records (Peterson & Pell, 2025). These surveillance limitations are particularly significant in New Mexico given the disproportionate representation of American Indian and Alaska Native individuals among the population experiencing homelessness identified in the dataset, a population whose health encounters at federal facilities fall entirely outside the tracking system.

The New Mexico Environmental Public Health Tracking Cold-Related Illness Dashboard provides the most granular real-time window into the seasonal emergency department burden attributable to cold exposure across the state. The dashboard aggregates near real-time cold-related illness emergency department visit data from approximately 89% of non-federal hospitals statewide, tracking diagnoses that include hypothermia, frostbite, and other effects of reduced temperature from October through spring each year (New Mexico Department of Health, n.d.). The operational value of this surveillance infrastructure is illustrated by the 2023-2024 winter season, during which the New Mexico Department of Health reported 525 cold-related emergency department visits statewide by mid-January 2024, with nine confirmed deaths, a figure that rose to 619 visits and at least 11 deaths by early February 2024 (New Mexico Department of Health, 2024). These counts, which do not include Indian Health Service or Veterans Affairs facilities and therefore represent a floor rather than a ceiling of actual burden, reflect a population arriving at emergency departments in acute distress from preventable cold exposure. The dashboard's capacity for near real-time, county-level monitoring provides state emergency managers with

actionable situational awareness to direct resources, activate warming capacity, and coordinate field outreach in response to evolving cold weather conditions (Dirmyer, 2018). At the community level, the sustained scale of cold-weather mortality is further documented by the annual homeless memorial in Santa Fe, which has recorded between 36 and 39 deaths per year among the local population experiencing homelessness since 2021, up from a pre-pandemic baseline of approximately 26 to 27 deaths annually, with community outreach workers affirming that housing instability is considered a contributing factor in each recorded death (Salkin, 2024; Santa Fe New Mexican, 2022).

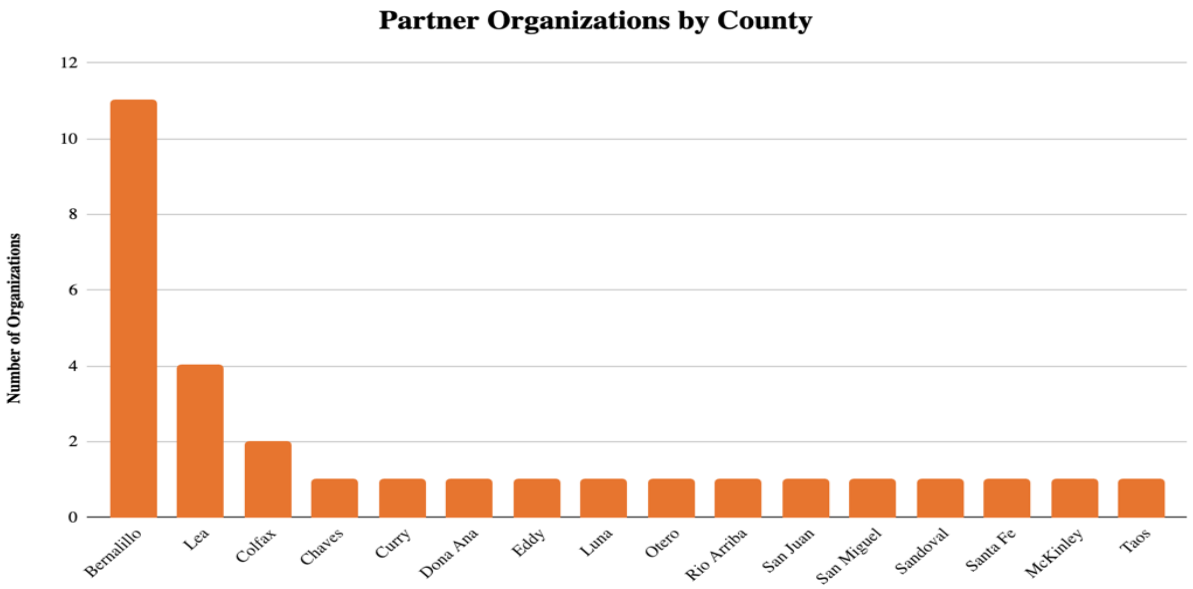
Support for Winter Readiness Funding

National and state-level data establish a clear, evidence-based foundation for targeted winter readiness investment directed at persons experiencing homelessness in New Mexico. Cold-related illness and death among this population are not anomalous occurrences; they are recurring, documented, and disproportionate outcomes of sustained exposure to winter conditions without adequate shelter. The following sections describe how winter readiness funds were deployed in response to this documented need.

Winter Readiness Initiative

Through the Winter Readiness Fund, a total of $800,385.50 was distributed to 28 partner organizations across New Mexico during the winter of 2025-2026. These funds were designed to increase the capacity of nonprofits, shelters, and community organizations to respond to the immediate survival needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability during extreme cold weather conditions. All grantees were required to submit a formal data report using a provided template, submit invoices using a provided invoice template, and participate in biweekly guidance calls throughout the grant period.

$800,386	28	14	11,281
Total Funds Distributed	Organizations Reporting	Counties Reached	Total Contacts Recorded



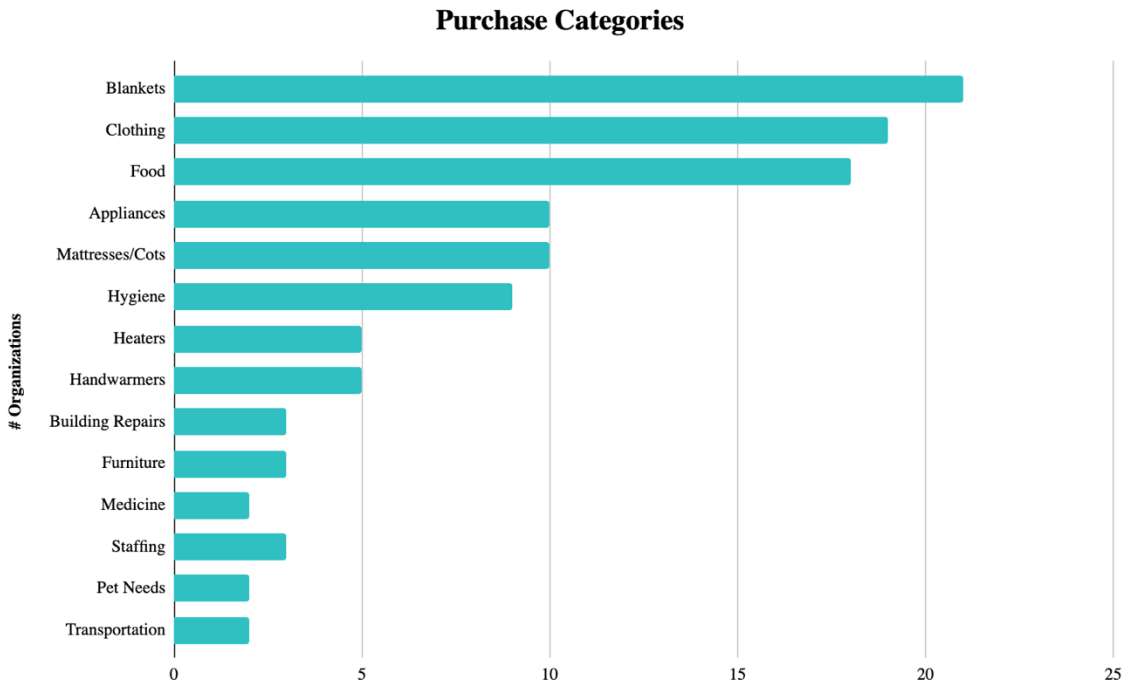
Services Delivered

The funds supported a broad spectrum of services that collectively addressed the most urgent winter survival needs. Across all reporting grantees, the following service contacts were documented:

Service Type	People Served / Interactions
Transportation	**5,285**
Pet services	**37**
Laundry services	**284**
Bedspace nights	**1,180**
Harm reduction	**1,397**
Food pantry visits	**1,506**
Blankets & heat sources	**1,956**
Hygiene / shower access	**2,165**
Case management	**2,228**
Warming shelter	**2,879**
Clothing distributed	**4,257**
Street outreach	**4,862**
Meals served	**6,619**

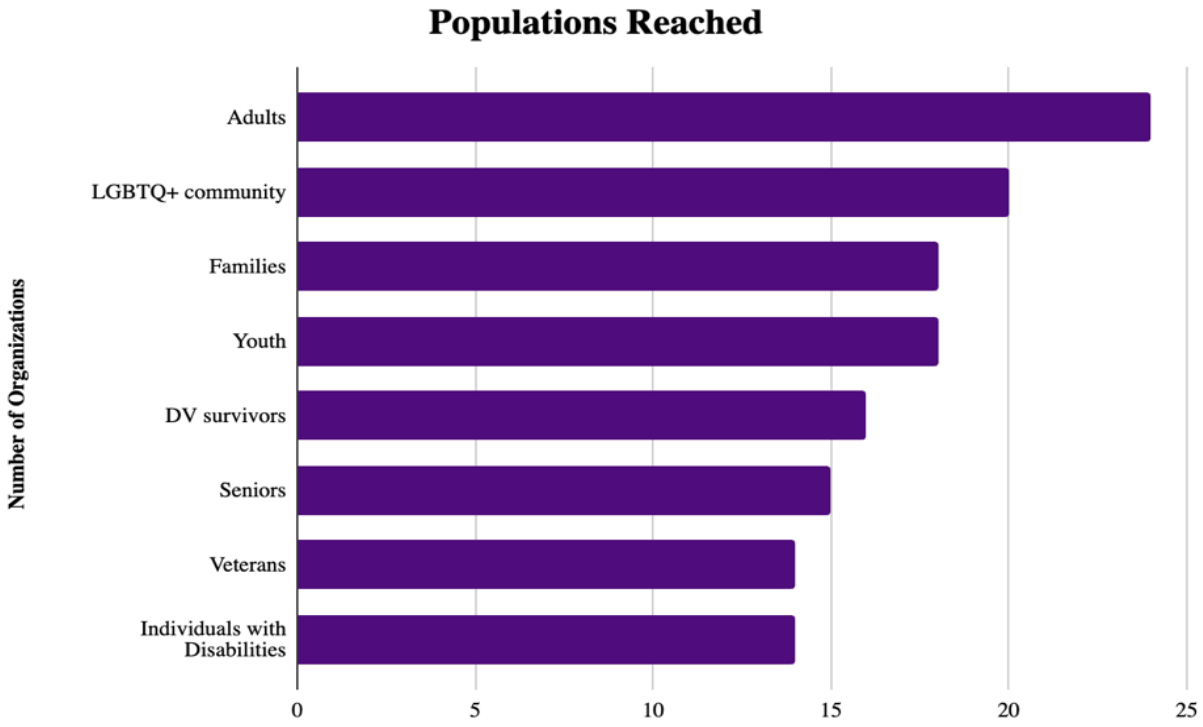
Purchase Categories and Capacity Investments

Grantees were given flexibility in how they deployed funds to meet the specific needs of their communities. The chart below shows the number of organizations that purchased items in each category, reflecting both immediate survival needs and longer-term capacity investments.



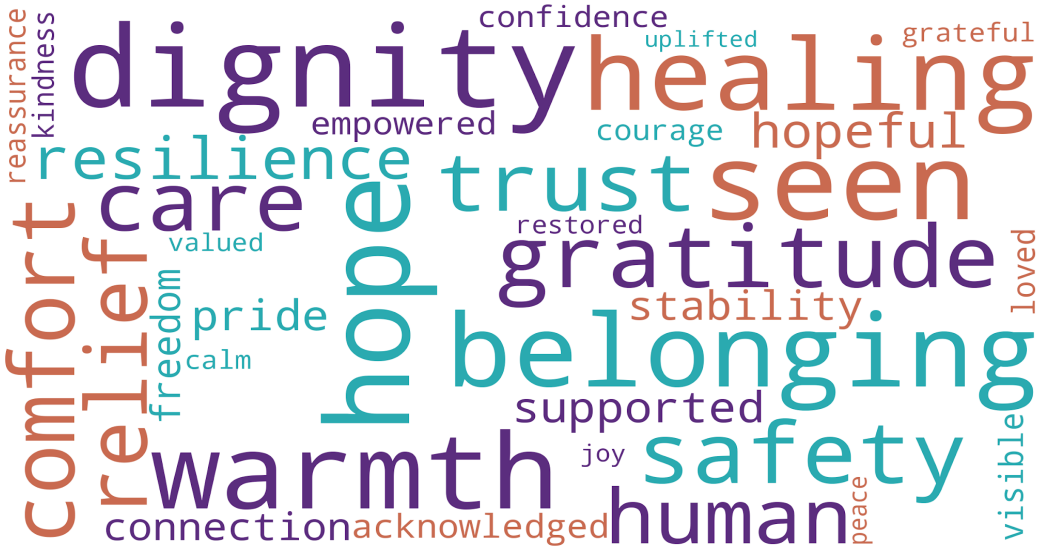
Populations Served

Funds reached New Mexico's most vulnerable populations. The chart below reflects the number of organizations serving each population group, based on organizational self-reporting.



Community Voices and Stories

The impact of the Winter Readiness Fund cannot be fully captured in numbers alone. Through the formal reporting process, grantees submitted narrative impact statements alongside their data reports. A consistent picture emerged: these funds restored dignity, built trust, and strengthened community resilience during one of the most difficult seasons of the year.



Words used by clients and grantee staff to describe the impact of Winter Readiness services, as reported in formal grantee submissions

Centro Sávila

Albuquerque, Bernalillo County | $14,933.50

Beyond meeting these basic needs, the impact of the Winter Coat Drive extended to emotional and psychological well-being. Clients expressed deep gratitude and shared personal stories of feeling unseen, unsupported, and overwhelmed prior to receiving assistance. The act of receiving warm clothing and essential items, along with compassionate interaction from staff, helped restore a sense of dignity, care, and hope.

> ***"We are deeply grateful for your generous donation of 30 adult-size puffer jackets received on Thursday, December 11, 2025. Your thoughtful gift will make a meaningful difference for our 30 students, helping them stay warm and comfortable during the upcoming winter break and into the second school semester. Many of the families we serve are refugees and immigrants facing significant challenges, and your kindness brings not only warmth but also a sense of belonging and safety to our community. Thank you for standing with us and for supporting our students and their families in such a caring way. Your partnership truly matters."***
>
> ***-APS International High School, Community Partner***

United Way of Lea County

Hobbs, Lea County | $9,000.00

The Warming Capacity initiative strengthened Lea County's ability to respond to extreme weather emergencies in a coordinated and effective way. Led by United Way of Lea County, the effort brought together nonprofit partners, municipal resources, emergency services, healthcare providers, and outreach programs around a shared response strategy. Through partnerships with the Salvation Army, Isaiah Soup Kitchen, Heart's Desire, and the City of Tatum Library, warming centers were activated across multiple communities. Backpacks extended that support by helping individuals stay protected even after leaving indoor spaces. The initiative reduced strain on emergency rooms, law enforcement, and crisis services by addressing cold-weather exposure before it became an emergency. It also highlighted the importance of preparedness in a rural county with limited shelter infrastructure. By working through trusted partners, services were delivered quickly, equitably, and without duplication. Beyond the immediate response, this effort strengthened trust, coordination, and community resilience across Lea County.

COPE

Alamogordo, Otero County | $85,800.00

This winter, when no one else in our community was providing essentials to people experiencing homelessness, we did. We prepared hot meals for those in our shelter and on the streets, opened our doors to offer warmth, coffee, snacks, and basic necessities, and made sure people had a safe place to turn. Without these funds, many would have gone without food, shelter, or support during the coldest months of the year.

> ***"Our community did not have anyone handing out essentials to the homeless this winter. We were able to distribute coats, blankets and hygiene products on the streets. We prepared and cooked hot meals for people in the shelter and on the streets. We provided children clothing and undergarments for school. Some children didn't have shoes. Without these funds, clients would have been without any assistance."***
>
> ***-COPE***

Enlace Comunitario

Albuquerque, Bernalillo County | $116,850.00

Thanks to Winter Readiness Funds, Enlace was able to respond with compassion and urgency during a deeply difficult season. Enlace's staff recognized the charged times families were facing and worked proactively to meet

clients where they were, supporting their household's healing while reducing unnecessary stress. For Eduardo*, who was limiting travel because of increased local ICE/CBP activity, having a care kit delivered directly to him and his daughter brought relief and peace of mind. For Carmen*, who had just moved into a safe apartment with her two young children, these funds provided food for the holidays, warm clothing, blankets, a portable heater, diapers, and hygiene supplies. Together, their stories show that this support was about more than essentials—it was about helping families feel safe, stable, and cared for when they needed it most.

*Names changed for confidentiality.

DreamTree Project

Taos, Taos County | $35,900.00

One shelter youth who stayed at DreamTree Project for around 4 months was finally placed with a new resource family. Though he will be missed, staff and peers are cheering him on as he transitions to a new chapter in his life. He's closer to his family in Albuquerque and one step closer to his goal of entering transitional living in his community. He called the shelter to share how happy and free he feels and that he was preparing for a sleepover that evening with his sister. He'll be able to transition to in-person learning at his high school and continue his search for his biological mother. This youth is very kind, unique, funny, helpful, and authentic and he's left a wonderful mark at DreamTree.

Barriers

The Winter Readiness Fund represented a meaningful and timely investment in New Mexico's capacity to protect its most vulnerable residents. Grantee reports, submitted through required formal data templates, invoices, and biweekly check-ins, revealed consistent barriers and clear opportunities to strengthen future funding cycles. The following findings are drawn directly from grantee-submitted documentation.

Reimbursement Model Creates Cash Flow Hardship

Several grantees, particularly small rural nonprofits, identified the reimbursement-based funding structure as a significant barrier to rapid response. Project Comunidad stated directly in their report: "As a small rural nonprofit with two part-time staff and a very limited budget, we do not have the cash flow to front costs for supplies and wait for repayment. In a community like Luna County, where resources are already stretched thin, this creates real barriers to responding quickly to urgent needs."

Demand Consistently Exceeded Available Supply

Across the state, grantees reported that need outpaced available resources. Centro Sávila closed its coat request list after one week and still had 27 outstanding requests it could not fill. The NM Harm Reduction Collaborative reported that demand for coats and space heaters exceeded available inventory throughout their five-week program period. Hopeworks stated that more funding would allow them to purchase more supplies and food for both clients and the broader community.

Limited Infrastructure in Rural and Frontier Communities

Several grantees serve communities with little to no existing shelter infrastructure. Otero County has no homeless shelter, as documented by COPE. Lea County similarly has no permanent homeless shelter, as noted by both United Way of Lea County and Isaiah's Soup Kitchen. Organizations in these areas are not supplementing existing systems; they are the only system available.

Destruction of Distributed Supplies

The NM Harm Reduction Collaborative reported that participants informed them that many distributed supplies had been destroyed by solid waste management and APD, which increased the volume of goods needed for redistribution. This represents a systemic challenge in which municipal actions directly undermine community-level investments in survival supplies.

Administrative Burden on Smaller Organizations

While formal reporting through structured templates, invoices, and biweekly guidance calls was a necessary component of fund accountability, some smaller organizations found the administrative requirements difficult to sustain alongside direct service delivery. This is particularly true for organizations where the same individuals providing services are also responsible for documentation, data collection, and financial reporting.

Funding Recommendations

Transition to Advance or Hybrid Disbursement

Future funding cycles should explore providing upfront disbursements or a partial advance to enable organizations, especially small and rural nonprofits, to procure goods without incurring organizational financial risk. A hybrid model offering an initial advance with reconciliation upon invoice submission would preserve accountability while removing the cash flow barrier that limits the speed and scale of community response.

Increase Overall Fund Capacity

The documented gap between supply and demand across multiple grantees points clearly to a need for increased overall investment. Multiple organizations reported running out of supplies well before the end of winter. An expansion of the Winter Readiness Fund would allow grantees to begin purchasing earlier in the season, maintain adequate inventories, and extend service periods through late winter.

Invest in Year-Round Emergency Preparedness

Multiple grantees noted that the same populations vulnerable during winter face comparable risks in summer from extreme heat. United Way of Lea County specifically recommended expanding this model to include summer heat-response kits distributed through the same trusted community networks. The infrastructure and partnerships established through the Winter Readiness Fund provide a proven framework for that expansion.

Continue Investment in Durable Organizational Capacity

Several grantees used Winter Readiness Funds to purchase appliances, make building repairs, and invest in infrastructure that will serve clients for years to come. Future fund guidelines should explicitly affirm the value of these durable capacity investments alongside emergency consumables.

Reduce Administrative Burden for Smaller Grantees

Consider tiered reporting requirements based on grant size. Biweekly guidance calls provided valuable support and should be continued, supplemented with written summaries and templates to reduce live participation burden on part-time staff.

The Impact of One Mission

Traditional evaluation frameworks often fail to capture the full reach of mission-driven funding, but the Winter Readiness Fund tells a broader story.

Across New Mexico, over **$800,000** was distributed, touching far more than the **11,281 service contacts**. As the evaluation team reviewed invoices and organizational narratives, a consistent theme emerged: these dollars moved through entire communities. Local electricians, furniture stores, grocery vendors, construction companies, and neighborhood contractors were called upon, not by coincidence, but because our organizations are embedded in the places they serve.

In Lea County, multiple organizations coordinated strategically to pool resources and deliver a comprehensive community response. In Alamogordo, funds flowed to local businesses that updated electrical systems, furnished bedspace, and kept staff fed as they prepared meals for clients. Enlace Comunitario repaired and replaced windows and completed critical building upgrades, all through local contractors.

The result was more than service delivery. The Winter Readiness Fund built communities of practice, strengthened local economies, and renewed a shared commitment that crosses organizational lines: that every neighbor matters, and no one should face winter without support.

Closing the Statewide Gap in Emergency Weather Response

The providers delivering Shelter/Winter Readiness services — including emergency shelter, street outreach, and food bank operations — have demonstrated sustained commitment to meeting the immediate and urgent needs of individuals and families during the most vulnerable months of the year. As this work continues to grow in scale and complexity, two foundational gaps have emerged that, if addressed, would significantly strengthen both the quality and accountability of services delivered across the system.

Integrating Lived Experience into Program Planning, Oversight, and Continuous Quality Improvement

At present, Shelter/Winter Readiness providers do not have formalized structures through which individuals with lived experience of homelessness, housing instability, or food insecurity participate in the planning, design, monitoring, or oversight of the services they receive or have received. This is a significant gap. Providers closest to the work often develop strong instincts about what is and is not working — but those instincts are necessarily shaped by an organizational vantage point. The people navigating shelter intake on a cold night, moving through outreach encounters on the street, or relying on food bank distributions to feed their families hold knowledge about gaps, barriers, and opportunities for improvement that no administrative data set can fully capture.

Future program development should establish clear expectations that Shelter/Winter Readiness providers integrate lived experience experts into meaningful governance and program improvement roles. This includes participation in program planning processes, continuous quality improvement (CQI) structures, service design reviews, and advisory or oversight functions. Lived experience integration must be approached as a structural commitment rather than a consultative gesture — requiring that providers compensate participants equitably for their time, ensure safety and confidentiality, and design participation pathways that are accessible, trauma-informed, and free from any condition or consequence tied to service access.

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is the appropriate body to establish, house, and support this infrastructure at the system level. Rather than requiring each provider to independently develop lived experience advisory structures — a burden that falls disproportionately on smaller organizations — the CoC should develop and maintain a shared Lived Experience Advisory Council or equivalent body that Shelter/Winter Readiness providers can access, contribute to, and be accountable to. This approach ensures consistency, reduces duplication of effort, and elevates lived experience as a system-wide value rather than an individual provider responsibility. Funders should consider lived experience integration, facilitated through or in alignment with the CoC, as a condition of continued Shelter/Winter Readiness funding.

Adopting a CoC-Wide Consumer Feedback and Evaluation Mechanism

A second critical gap is the absence of a unified, standardized feedback mechanism through which individuals who access Winter Readiness services can share their experience across providers. Currently, consumer feedback — where it is collected at all — is fragmented, inconsistent in format, and rarely aggregated in ways that inform system-level planning or accountability. This limits the ability of both providers and oversight bodies to identify patterns, compare service experiences across sites, and make coordinated, evidence-informed improvements.

The CoC should adopt and host a mainstream consumer evaluation tool — applied consistently across all Winter Readiness providers operating within the CoC — that allows individuals to submit direct, ongoing feedback on their service experience. By housing this mechanism at the CoC level, feedback becomes a shared system asset rather than siloed provider data. This design also reduces the administrative burden on individual providers,

ensures a standardized approach to data collection and analysis, and creates a credible, independent channel through which participant voices can inform both provider practice and system-level policy.

The evaluation mechanism should be designed with the safety, dignity, and accessibility of participants as non-negotiable foundations. It should be available in multiple languages and formats, structured to protect anonymity, and completely decoupled from any individual's access to services. Feedback should be collected on a continuous basis — not only at annual intervals — and reviewed regularly by CoC leadership. Aggregate findings should be incorporated into CoC planning processes, provider performance conversations, and funding decisions, ensuring that the experiences of the people Winter Readiness services exist to serve are not a footnote to the system but a driver of it.

Providers should receive regular, accessible reports of the feedback relevant to their programs, and should be supported in using those findings within their own CQI processes. Over time, this shared evaluation infrastructure has the potential to become one of the CoC's most valuable tools for system accountability, continuous improvement, and demonstrating impact to funders and policymakers.

Developing Statewide Emergency Weather Protocols, Standards, and Training Infrastructure in Partnership with the Balance of State

A third critical need is a coordinated, statewide framework for emergency weather response. The Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Balance of State must establish shared protocols, operational standards, and training infrastructure through active partnership. Smaller and rural organizations demonstrated measurably strong performance in the most recent round of winter readiness funding, yet underfunding has constrained their operational capacity in ways that coordinated institutional support can directly address. The CoC and the Balance of State are positioned to provide that support by developing a uniform Emergency Weather Response Protocol establishing activation thresholds, low-barrier intake standards, staffing expectations, and trauma-informed crisis intervention procedures. That protocol should be designed to codify and scale effective practices already in use, not impose external frameworks on organizations with demonstrated competency. Sustained investment in accessible, on-demand training and active advocacy for Code Blue Winter Readiness Emergency Funding as a continuing state priority are equally essential to ensuring that high-performing organizations have the institutional legitimacy and resource continuity necessary to maintain emergency weather services.

Expanding System Readiness to Address Extreme Heat and All-Weather Emergency Conditions

Expanding the CoC's emergency preparedness framework to encompass extreme heat and all-weather emergency conditions is equally critical. Extreme heat ranks among the leading causes of weather-related mortality in the United States, with individuals experiencing homelessness disproportionately represented among the most physiologically vulnerable. Cooling center infrastructure, activation protocols, and provider readiness for summer emergencies remain substantially underdeveloped relative to existing winter response systems. The CoC and Balance of State should extend the framework described above to establish standardized cooling center protocols, operational standards, and activation criteria scaled for providers of varying organizational capacity. The culminating objective is a comprehensive All-Weather Emergency Preparedness Framework, housed within the CoC in partnership with the Balance of State, that positions the continuum to protect unsheltered individuals across all seasonal conditions.

Intimate Partner Violence in New Mexico

Domestic violence remains one of the most persistent and consequential public safety challenges facing New Mexico. The 2024 New Mexico Crime Victimization Report found that 19% of New Mexicans surveyed reported experiencing domestic violence within the preceding 12 months. Over the course of a lifetime, 37.6% of women and 33.3% of men in New Mexico experience intimate partner violence (New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2021). These figures reflect not only the scale of the problem, but the degree to which it cuts across communities and demographics statewide.

The 2024 New Mexico Crime Victimization Report also reveals a significant relationship between housing instability and victimization risk. Among survey respondents who had experienced homelessness, 39% reported domestic violence, at nearly three times the rate reported by those with stable housing. Survivors without stable housing face compounded dangers, as the loss of a home is frequently both a consequence of abuse and a barrier to escaping it.

Demand for services routinely exceeds what the system can provide. On a single day, September 10, 2025, a statewide census found 771 survivors receiving services across New Mexico, while domestic violence hotlines fielded 248 contacts over a 24-hour period (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2025). On that same day, 108 requests for services went unmet due to insufficient resources, and 46% of those unmet requests were for emergency housing (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2025). For many survivors, the absence of available shelter is a matter of immediate safety.

The consequences of domestic violence extend to loss of life. The 2025 New Mexico Intimate Partner Violence Death Review Team Annual Report documented 26 incidents resulting in 28 deaths statewide (New Mexico Intimate Partner Violence Death Review Team, 2025). The report also identified a critical need to improve how existing resources are distributed and to expand access to culturally appropriate services, particularly in rural communities where survivors face additional barriers to safety and support (New Mexico Intimate Partner Violence Death Review Team, 2025).

Building Safer Spaces for Survivors

During the 2024 legislative session, $5 million was appropriated through House Bill 2 to support repairs and improvements to domestic violence facilities across New Mexico (New Mexico Legislature, 2024). Following that appropriation, the Office of Housing worked in collaboration with the Department of Finance and Administration to implement the funding process.

Through that process, domestic violence service providers identified significant facility needs affecting their ability to safely and effectively serve survivors. Reported concerns included foundation cracks and sinkholes that compromised septic systems, nonfunctional wastewater lift stations, failed HVAC systems, the inability to complete ADA-compliant upgrades, a lack of HIPAA-compliant space for confidential client services, and plumbing systems that could no longer accommodate growing demand.

In some cases, facilities had not received substantial improvements in more than 40 years. These conditions directly affected whether shelters and transitional living facilities could operate safely and meet the needs of survivors. Based on the needs identified by providers, the Office of Housing and the Department of Finance and Administration awarded funding to 12 counties for the repair and improvement of emergency shelters and transitional living facilities.

Geographic Reach of Funds

Funds were distributed across twelve counties. The following counties and organizations were provided with funding:

County or City	Amount	Organization(s)
Otero	$400,000.00	C.O.P.E.
Bernalillo	$925,000.00	City of Albuquerque Enlace Communitario
Eddy	$72,412.00	Carlsbad Battered Families Shelter
Curry	$25,000.00	Hartley House

San Juan	$285,000.00	New Beginnings
Cibola	$275,000.00	Roberta's Place
Chaves	$50,000.00	Roswell Refuge
Lincoln	$112,000.00	The Nest
Valencia	$2,348,588.00	Valencia County Shelter Services
Lea	$206,000.00	Option Inc.
Dona Ana	$301,000.00	La Casa Inc.
Santa Fe	$90,000.00	Consuelo's Place

Use of Funds

Organizations worked alongside city and county partners to complete projects that not only addressed structural issues but also had impact across communities. Funds supported a range of critical facility improvements across multiple shelter sites, including HVAC replacements, fire alarm system updates, kitchen renovations, and flooring installations that eliminated longstanding safety hazards for residents. Fencing replacements and plexiglass upgrades strengthened physical security, while lift station repairs and IT infrastructure investments ensured uninterrupted operations and reliable utility services. Several organizations also expanded residential capacity and livability by furnishing housing units with appliances, bedding, linens, and everyday essentials, and by adding outdoor recreational amenities such as playground shade structures and sports equipment to support the wellbeing of children and families in shelter.

Funds also advanced longer-term capital development efforts that will significantly expand service capacity across the region. In Central New Mexico, pre-construction and land acquisition activities are underway for a trauma-informed shelter campus that will integrate emergency shelter, forensic and SANE services, counseling, and advocacy in a single, co-located facility serving survivors across Valencia, Socorro, Catron, and Torrance Counties, as well as the Laguna and Isleta Pueblos. In Albuquerque, Enlace Comunitario broke ground in April 2026 on a new building addition connecting program and administrative spaces to improve safety and security for staff and clients. Additional expansion projects remain in progress, with new construction that will provide dedicated space for counseling, crisis intervention, legal clinics, and confidential client consultations during protection order proceedings.

Behind every repaired fence, every replaced appliance, and every freshly painted hallway is a survivor who deserves to feel safe, dignified, and supported. These investments reflect a shared commitment to ensuring that the places where survivors seek refuge are not merely functional but truly healing. Whether it was a child finally able to play outside in the shade, a resident preparing a meal in a fully equipped kitchen, or a family sleeping on a new mattress for the first time in months, these improvements made a tangible difference in people's daily lives during some of their most difficult moments. The work accomplished through these funds is a testament to what becomes possible when government partners and community organizations unite around a common purpose: *protecting and restoring the lives of domestic violence survivors and their children.*

Descansas
Roswell Refuge

A family entered the shelter during a high-stress transition. When they walked in, they saw the newly repaired living quarters. The parent remarked that the fresh and secure atmosphere allowed their children to settle in and sleep through the night immediately. It was something they had not experienced in months.

That is what shelter improvements made possible.

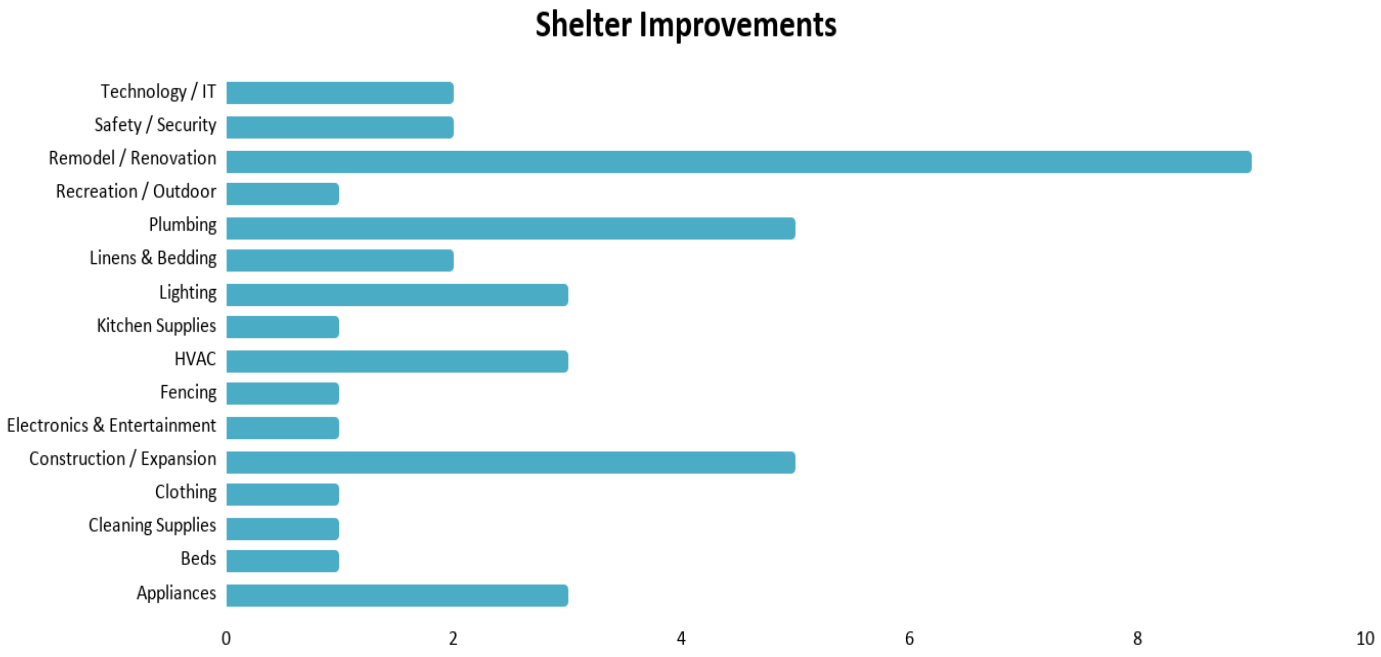
Roswell Refuge received funds to repair and upgrade the physical facility that houses survivors of domestic

violence. The investment covered plumbing and HVAC repairs across nine bathrooms, ADA-accessible fixtures, kitchen repairs, and three HVAC units. It funded a secure gated entry system with keypad and controlled access. It replaced outdated exterior lighting with five new code-compliant wall packs so that the property was safer after dark.

Through it all, the shelter never closed. All 28 adults and 13 children continued to receive services without interruption.

72% of surveyed clients said they felt significantly safer following the facility repairs. Maintenance-related stress reports from staff and residents dropped by 15% over the following quarter. Use of the newly repaired common areas for peer support activities increased by 25%. Since the structural updates were completed, there have been zero reported safety hazards or facility-related injuries.

When a shelter is safe, secure, and functioning, survivors can stop focusing on survival and start focusing on what comes next. For one family, it started with a full night of sleep.



Impact on Communities

The improvements made possible through these funds did more than repair walls and replace equipment. They restored a sense of safety, dignity, and normalcy for survivors at some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Across shelters, residents reported feeling more secure, more comfortable, and more supported in environments that were cleaner, brighter, and better maintained. At Carlsbad Battered Families Shelter, a modernized facility helped residents feel more at peace during their stay. At Hartley House, replacing the fence made the shelter safer and more secure, giving clients the confidence that their abusers could not reach them and allowing them to concentrate on taking care of themselves and their children. At New Beginnings, a more home-like environment eased residents' transition into shelter life, while interview-appropriate clothing provided a quiet

but powerful boost to confidence and employment readiness. These are not small things. For a survivor starting over, they can make all the difference.

For children living in shelter, these investments carried a particular significance. At La Casa, Inc., the installation of a playground shade structure transformed an outdoor space that had been unusable during hot months into a place where children could play, laugh, and begin to reclaim a sense of childhood. At Consuelo's Place, recreational equipment gave children opportunities for physical activity and stress relief in the midst of crisis. Enlace Comunitario's upcoming building addition will create safer pathways between program spaces, easing the anxiety of parents and caregivers whose children move between buildings for activities. For families who have experienced trauma, these spaces are not simply amenities. They are essential tools for emotional regulation, healing, and the rebuilding of trust in the world around them.

The impact of these investments also extended to the stability and long-term outcomes of the survivors being served. At Consuelo's Place, 64 percent of clients successfully exited into long-term housing, a testament to how a well-functioning, dignified shelter environment supports people in moving forward. At Roberta's Place, the only domestic violence shelter in Cibola County, infrastructure repairs ensured uninterrupted services for survivors across a vast rural region, including Tribal and underserved communities, preventing dangerous gaps in the safety net. Option, Inc. in Hobbs, operating out of a building dating back to the 1950s and serving 2,448 individuals in 2025, used these funds to replace aging plumbing and HVAC systems, giving a decades-old facility new life and ensuring survivors could access care in a safe, functioning environment. As one executive director put it simply, these funds allowed their organization to continue its good fight for years to come.

Una Palabra

The stories shared by organizations across New Mexico tell us something we must carry forward as a state: ***improving the physical spaces where survivors seek refuge is inseparable from improving their quality of life, their safety, and their path toward healing.***

When a fence is replaced, a child sleeps without fear. When a floor is repaired, a senior walks without risk of falling. When a washing machine works, a family maintains dignity. When a building is modernized, a survivor can finally focus on rebuilding rather than simply enduring. The communities surrounding these shelters are stronger because of this work too. Operational shelters protect entire rural regions and Tribal communities that have no other options. Improved technology strengthens coordination across systems that respond to homelessness and crisis. Deeper partnerships between shelters, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and local government mean that survivors are met with a more connected and responsive safety net.

New Mexicans carry within them querencia, a profound love of place, a deep and abiding connection to home and to one another. This investment is a reflection of that love. Every repaired wall, every safe room, every functional kitchen is a declaration that the people who walk through these doors *belong* here, that they are held by this place, and that New Mexico's commitment to a high quality of life for all who call it home is as enduring as the land itself.

Future Needs

Integrating Lived Experience into Program Design, Oversight, and Continuous Quality Improvement

The thirteen providers awarded funding through this initiative have demonstrated meaningful commitment to delivering domestic violence services and supports across their communities. As this body of work matures, two critical gaps have emerged that warrant focused attention and strategic investment in the next phase of implementation.

Currently, the funded providers do not have formalized mechanisms for including individuals with lived experience of domestic violence in the planning, design, monitoring, or oversight of their programs. This represents a significant gap in how services are structured and evaluated. Research and best practice in trauma-informed, survivor-centered service delivery consistently demonstrate that programs designed without the direct input of those they serve risk misalignment between provider assumptions and participant needs — often in ways that are invisible to the organization but acutely felt by the people seeking help.

Future funding cycles and program requirements should establish clear expectations that providers integrate lived experience experts into governance, policy and procedure design, and program development processes. This includes, but is not limited to, participation in program planning committees, continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes, advisory or oversight structures, and service design reviews. Lived experience experts bring irreplaceable insight into barriers to access, gaps in service delivery, and opportunities for program improvement that cannot be captured through administrative data or provider observation alone. Meaningful integration — not tokenistic consultation — requires that providers compensate lived experience experts for their time, protect their confidentiality and safety, and create structures that are accessible and trauma-informed.

Funders and oversight bodies are encouraged to require that providers demonstrate how lived experience informs their programs as a condition of continued funding, and to offer technical assistance to providers in building these structures equitably and sustainably.

Establishing a Participant Feedback Mechanism

A second critical gap is the absence of a standardized, accessible mechanism through which program participants can submit direct feedback on their service experience. Without a structured feedback process, providers have limited ability to assess whether their services are meeting participant needs, identify patterns of concern, or make responsive, evidence-informed adjustments in real time.

Future program requirements should include the establishment of a participant feedback system — designed with participant safety, anonymity, and accessibility as its foundational principles — through which individuals can share their experiences of the services they received. This mechanism should function as a continuous, low-barrier channel for feedback rather than a one-time or annual satisfaction survey. Feedback should be collected in multiple formats and languages, reviewed on a regular basis by program leadership, and integrated into CQI processes. Importantly, the system must be structured so that participants can submit feedback without fear of reprisal or impact on their access to services.

Providers should be supported in analyzing feedback trends and using findings to drive program improvements. Aggregate, de-identified feedback data should also be made available to oversight bodies as part of regular program reporting, ensuring that the perspectives of program participants inform not only provider-level decisions but also system-level planning and policy.

Securing Recurring and Sustainable Funding to Support Ongoing Operations, Facility Maintenance, and Family-Centered Services

A third critical need is the establishment of recurring, sustainable funding mechanisms dedicated to the ongoing operational integrity of domestic violence service providers. Single-cycle or project-based appropriations, while valuable, are structurally insufficient to support the continuous operational demands of residential and community-based domestic violence programs. Infrastructure depreciates, service volumes fluctuate, and the complexity of needs presented by survivors and their dependents requires a funding model that reflects the sustained, non-episodic nature of this work.

The data emerging from this initiative underscore the degree to which physical environment, operational stability, and program quality are interconnected determinants of survivor outcomes. Providers that were able to address

deferred maintenance, replace failing systems, and improve residential conditions demonstrated measurable gains in client stability and successful transitions to permanent housing. These outcomes are not self-sustaining without continued investment. Absent a reliable funding base, providers face the compounding burden of deferred costs, reduced service capacity, and diminished program quality that disproportionately affects the highest-need populations they serve.

Future funding frameworks should incorporate multi-year, renewable award structures that enable providers to engage in long-range operational planning, capital maintenance scheduling, and programmatic development. Recurring allocations should be designed to support core operational functions including facility maintenance and infrastructure, workforce retention, and the continued implementation of quality improvement priorities identified through this and subsequent funding cycles. Funders and oversight bodies should also consider establishing baseline operational standards as conditions of award renewal, ensuring that sustained investment is accompanied by accountability for program quality and participant outcomes.

Recurring investment in the operational foundation of domestic violence providers is not a peripheral concern. It is a prerequisite for the delivery of safe, effective, and equitable services to survivors and families across all communities served by this initiative. It is also a statement of values. Survivors and their children deserve to be received into environments that reflect their inherent worth. Quality of life within shelter settings is not an amenity. It is a clinical and ethical imperative. Even at the hardest moment of a family's life, the spaces built to serve them should be beautiful, dignified, and full of hope. Sustained funding is the mechanism through which that standard is set, maintained, and continuously improved.

The Conditions that Shaped Innovation

IN THIS SECTION

Accessible and Relevant Training in Community by Community
Collective Knowledge from New Mexico
Low Barrier, Immediate, Flex Funds Prevention
Emergency Response to Real Life Events
Capacity in Physical Safety
Unified Lessons Learned and Foundation for Future Work

The Innovation and the Conditions That Shaped It

The innovation emerged from a recognition that New Mexico's housing, homelessness, behavioral health, and community service workforce already possessed substantial expertise that traditional workforce development models rarely acknowledged. Across urban neighborhoods, rural communities, frontier regions, and Tribal Nations, practitioners have long relied on community cultural wealth, lived expertise, intergenerational knowledge, mutual aid traditions, and relationship-based problem solving to support community wellbeing. Yet these forms of knowledge were seldom treated as formal workforce assets within statewide training systems.

The Leadership Academy and Frontline Provider Academy addressed this gap by building workforce development around the strengths already present within New Mexico communities. Rather than positioning expertise as something delivered to participants, the academies created statewide communities of practice where practitioners, leaders, peers, and community members could exchange knowledge, reflect collectively, and strengthen professional capacity through shared learning. This approach elevated lived expertise, cultural knowledge, and local practice wisdom as legitimate forms of evidence alongside established professional frameworks, creating a workforce development model that was culturally grounded, community-centered, and uniquely responsive to the realities of New Mexico.

Recommendations for Statewide Systemic Change

1. Invest in Communities of Practice as Core Workforce Infrastructure

The Leadership Academy and Frontline Provider Academy demonstrated that workforce development extends beyond technical training alone. Across New Mexico, practitioners consistently identified peer learning, reflective dialogue, mentorship, relationship building, and collaborative problem solving as essential to workforce effectiveness, innovation, and retention. Future statewide investments should support Communities of Practice as a permanent component of the homelessness response system, creating ongoing opportunities for providers, peers, behavioral health professionals, housing practitioners, Tribal partners, and community leaders to learn from one another, share emerging practices, and strengthen coordinated responses to homelessness.

2. Recognize Lived Expertise and Community Cultural Wealth as Workforce Assets

The findings demonstrate that some of the workforce's most valuable resources already exist within New Mexico communities. Lived expertise, cultural knowledge, community relationships, systems navigation skills, storytelling traditions, and local problem-solving strategies consistently emerged as strengths that support effective service delivery and systems change. Future policy and workforce initiatives should intentionally recognize, cultivate, and elevate these assets alongside formal credentials and technical competencies, ensuring that the knowledge held by communities remains visible within leadership development, program design, and statewide planning efforts.

3. Strengthen Relational Infrastructure Across Systems

Participants repeatedly described relationships as the mechanism through which services are coordinated, crises are managed, partnerships are sustained, and individuals remain connected to care. As New Mexico continues to address homelessness, workforce shortages, and behavioral health challenges, investments should support the relational infrastructure that allows systems to function effectively in practice. This includes strengthening cross sector partnerships, multidisciplinary collaboration, peer support networks, reflective supervision, and opportunities for ongoing relationship building across organizations and regions.

4. Build Workforce Sustainability Through Workforce Wellbeing

Addressing homelessness requires a stable and resilient workforce. The findings suggest that workforce sustainability depends not only on recruitment and compensation, but also on emotional sustainability, belonging, supervision, professional growth, and access to supportive peer networks. Future workforce strategies should incorporate approaches that reduce isolation, support reflective practice, and acknowledge the emotional realities of community-based work. Sustaining the people who serve New Mexico communities is essential to sustaining the systems those communities rely upon.

5. Preserve and Share Practice Wisdom Across Generations

The academies revealed a remarkable body of practice wisdom distributed across New Mexico's housing, homelessness, behavioral health, and community service sectors. Future statewide efforts should create mechanisms for preserving, documenting, and sharing this knowledge so that lessons learned in one community can strengthen practice throughout the state. Supporting mentorship, peer exchange, leadership development, and knowledge sharing networks will help ensure that expertise developed through lived experience and years of service remains available to future generations of practitioners.

6. Advance Human-Centered Systems Change

Participants consistently emphasized that lasting progress requires both structural and relational transformation. Expanding housing resources, strengthening behavioral health services, and improving system coordination remain critical priorities. Equally important is ensuring that systems are experienced as welcoming, culturally responsive, trauma informed and grounded in dignity. Future systems change efforts should continue to pair policy and infrastructure improvements with approaches that strengthen trust, belonging, community connection, and authentic engagement with the people most affected by homelessness.

Community Conversations

The Innovation and the Conditions That Shaped It

The ten Community Conversations demonstrated that workforce development occurs not only through formal instruction but also through opportunities for reflection, dialogue, relationship building, and collective learning. While originally designed as post-academy discussions, the conversations evolved into Communities of Practice that connected providers, leaders, peers, and practitioners across disciplines, organizations, and regions of New Mexico.

This innovation emerged in response to the realities of a workforce operating within increasingly complex environments characterized by housing shortages, behavioral health needs, workforce constraints, funding instability, and growing community demand. Participants consistently described the importance of having spaces where they could share experiences, exchange practical knowledge, examine challenges collectively, and learn from the diverse expertise present throughout the state. The Community Conversations created opportunities for participants to strengthen professional networks, reduce isolation, build trust across sectors, and develop shared understandings of effective practice. In doing so, they revealed that relational infrastructure and collective learning are not supplemental components of workforce development, but essential conditions that support workforce resilience, leadership growth, and systems improvement.

Recommendations for Statewide Systemic Change

1. Sustain Communities of Practice as a Workforce Development Strategy

The findings demonstrate that learning occurs through ongoing dialogue, reflection, mentorship, and peer exchange as well as through formal training. Future statewide workforce investments should continue to support Communities of Practice that connect practitioners across organizations, regions, and professional roles.

2. Strengthen Cross-Sector Learning and Collaboration

Participants consistently identified the value of engaging with colleagues from different disciplines and service systems. Continued opportunities for cross sector convening can strengthen coordination, reduce duplication of effort, and support more integrated responses to homelessness and housing instability.

3. Recognize Relational Capacity as a Workforce Asset

The conversations revealed that relationship building, trust, cultural humility, peer support, and collaborative problem solving are central workforce competencies. Workforce development initiatives should intentionally cultivate and support these capacities alongside technical skills.

4. Expand Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing Across Communities

The conversations surfaced a significant body of local expertise, practice wisdom, and innovative problem solving strategies. Future efforts should create mechanisms for documenting, preserving, and sharing this knowledge throughout New Mexico's homelessness response system.

Shelter and Winter Readiness

The Innovation and the Conditions That Shaped It

The Winter Readiness Fund demonstrated that trusted community organizations are often best positioned to respond rapidly and effectively to weather related emergencies. By providing flexible funding directly to local providers, the initiative enabled communities to address immediate survival needs while adapting resources to local conditions and service gaps. In a single season, 28 organizations across 14 counties delivered more than 11,281 service contacts, strengthening emergency response capacity in communities where shelter and outreach resources are often limited.

The initiative emerged in response to documented cold related illness and mortality among people experiencing homelessness, persistent service gaps in rural and frontier communities, and the need for more flexible emergency response mechanisms capable of addressing conditions as they occur. The report also demonstrated that these funds moved through entire communities, supporting local vendors, strengthening community partnerships, and building a broader response infrastructure that extended beyond individual transactions or isolated service contacts.

Recommendations for Statewide Systemic Change

1. Establish Winter Readiness Funding as a Recurring Statewide Investment

The Winter Readiness Fund demonstrated that relatively modest investments distributed through trusted community organizations can generate substantial statewide impact. Future funding should be established as a recurring component of New Mexico's homelessness and emergency preparedness strategy, providing organizations with the predictability needed to plan, procure supplies, and build response capacity before severe weather occurs.

2. Adopt Funding Models That Match Emergency Conditions

The reimbursement structure created significant challenges for smaller and rural organizations with limited cash flow. Emergency response funding should be structured to support rapid action through advance payments, hybrid reimbursement models, or other mechanisms that reduce financial barriers while maintaining accountability. Organizations responding to life threatening conditions should not be required to absorb financial risk in order to serve their communities.

3. Strengthen Rural and Frontier Emergency Response Capacity

The findings demonstrate that many rural and frontier organizations are not supplementing existing shelter systems; they are the shelter system. Future investments should prioritize strengthening the capacity of organizations operating in communities with limited emergency infrastructure, recognizing their essential role in protecting residents during severe weather events.

4. Develop a Coordinated Statewide Emergency Weather Framework

The Continuum of Care and Balance of State should continue developing shared protocols, training resources, operational standards, and emergency activation procedures that support providers across diverse community contexts. These efforts should build upon successful local practices already in use throughout New Mexico while creating greater consistency and coordination across the statewide response system.

5. Integrate Lived Experience into Emergency Planning and Evaluation

Individuals who navigate winter weather while experiencing homelessness possess critical knowledge about service accessibility, safety, barriers, and unmet needs. Future Winter Readiness efforts should incorporate structured opportunities for lived experience experts to inform program planning, continuous quality improvement, and system evaluation at both local and statewide levels.

6. Expand Emergency Preparedness Beyond Winter Response

The same communities and populations vulnerable to winter exposure frequently face significant risks during periods of extreme heat. The infrastructure, partnerships, and lessons developed through Winter Readiness provide a strong foundation for a broader all-weather emergency preparedness framework that supports communities throughout the year.

Domestic Violence Facility Funding and Capacity in Physical Safety

The Innovation and the Conditions That Shaped It

The House Bill 2 investment recognized that the physical condition of domestic violence facilities is inseparable from survivor safety, dignity, and healing. Across New Mexico, providers identified critical infrastructure needs that directly affected their ability to serve survivors and their children. Facility improvements supported through this funding enhanced physical safety, improved quality of life, expanded service capacity, and strengthened the long-term sustainability of domestic violence programs serving communities across the state.

The initiative emerged in response to growing service demand, aging facilities, deferred maintenance, and the recognition that survivors deserve environments that are safe, welcoming, and conducive to recovery. The improvements made possible through these funds did more than repair walls and replace equipment. They restored a sense of safety, dignity, and normalcy for survivors at some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. For children and families in shelter, these investments created spaces where healing, rest, play, and rebuilding could begin.

Recommendations for Statewide Systemic Change

1. Establish Recurring Funding for Domestic Violence Facility Preservation and Improvement

The House Bill 2 investment demonstrated that the physical condition of shelter facilities directly affects survivor safety, service quality, operational continuity, and long-term outcomes. Future funding structures should provide recurring opportunities for domestic violence providers to address facility maintenance, infrastructure improvements, accessibility needs, and capacity expansion before conditions reach crisis levels.

2. Recognize Shelter Environments as Essential Components of Survivor Well-being

The findings demonstrate that safe, functional, and dignified physical environments contribute meaningfully to healing, stability, and quality of life for survivors and their children. Future investments should continue supporting facility improvements that strengthen both safety and livability, recognizing that the environments in which survivors seek refuge play an important role in recovery and long-term stability.

3. Strengthen Survivor Voice in Program Development and Quality Improvement

Individuals with lived experience of domestic violence possess unique expertise regarding safety, accessibility, service delivery, and program effectiveness. Future funding initiatives should support the meaningful integration of survivor expertise into program planning, governance, continuous quality improvement, and service design processes.

4. Develop Shared Participant Feedback and Learning Systems

Establishing accessible and trauma informed participant feedback mechanisms can help providers better understand participant experiences, identify emerging needs, and strengthen service quality. Shared learning across providers can support continuous improvement while ensuring that survivor perspectives remain central to future system development.

5. Support Long Term Operational Stability for Domestic Violence Providers

Facility investments are most effective when paired with sustainable operational support. Future funding strategies should recognize the interconnected relationship between physical infrastructure, workforce stability, program quality, and survivor outcomes, creating conditions that allow providers to engage in long term planning and continuous improvement.

School-Social Work Partnerships and Workforce Development: Transforming Housing Support for Young People in New Mexico Schools

The Innovation and the Conditions That Shaped It

Students experiencing housing instability face extraordinary barriers to educational success. Yet schools are uniquely positioned to identify young people in crisis, connect them with support, and help stabilize their housing situations. Currently, school-based housing support in New Mexico is inconsistently implemented through stipend positions, often filled by individuals with minimal training and competing responsibilities. This innovation recognizes that transforming this into a professionalized, adequately resourced role represents a critical opportunity for systems change.

Schools and social work have historically operated as parallel systems. Yet for students experiencing housing instability, this separation is neither sustainable nor ethical. When school-based housing navigators work in genuine partnership with social workers, behavioral health professionals, and community housing providers, young people experience integrated support. The challenge lies not in whether this partnership should exist, but in formalizing, funding, and sustaining it so that young people and families receive coordinated, professional, evidence-based care grounded in cultural humility.

Recommendations for Statewide Systemic Change

1. Establish Statewide Uniform Job Description and Professional Qualification Standards

The state should establish a uniform job description for school-based housing navigators or McKinney-Vento coordinators as full-time positions dedicated solely to housing focused work. This position should require a

bachelor's degree (in social work, education, human services, or related field) or equivalent professional experience; training in housing focused case management, trauma informed practice, and community navigation; demonstrated ability to work across systems; and commitment to cultural humility and community-centered practice. Training standards should explicitly include trauma informed care, suicide prevention, mental health crisis protocols, substance use brief intervention, LGBTQ+ affirming practice, recognition of trafficking risk, and developmental approaches tailored to age.

2. Clarify Legal Frameworks for Data-Sharing and Child-Centered FERPA Practice

Schools and social service agencies operate under different confidentiality regimes. FERPA can create barriers to necessary information sharing when young people need housing assistance. The state should convene working groups to develop model data sharing agreements that comply with FERPA, state social services law, and behavioral health privacy regulations. Protocols should allow students age 16 and older to authorize information sharing directly without requiring parental consent when age-appropriate disclosure is in the student's interest. Clear criteria should be established for emergency situations where a student's safety is at risk. This effort should prioritize a young person-centered approach: the default should be that information necessary to stabilize a young person's housing situation flows between schools and community providers.

3. Establish Supervision and Mental Health Support Standards

Every school district employing school-based social workers or housing navigators should establish regular clinical supervision from a licensed clinical social worker or licensed professional counselor. Supervision should include case consultation, skill building, and explicit attention to staff wellbeing. School districts should implement peer supported debriefing protocols following critical incidents or high stress cases, drawing on evidence-based models that honor both clinical best practice and cultural traditions of mutual support and collective care.

4. Embed Peer Support and Community Health Worker Models in the Workforce

New Mexico has a strong tradition of peer support and community health worker models. The state should create career pathways for Certified Family Peer Support Specialists and Certified Youth Peer Support Specialists to work alongside professional social workers in school-based housing programs. This approach brings the voice and experience of people who have themselves navigated housing instability into the professional system, strengthens trust and cultural credibility in communities, creates employment and career advancement opportunities in under resourced communities, and aligns with evidence showing peer led interventions improve engagement and outcomes.

5. Leverage Medicaid Billing and Federal Workforce Development Funding

Medicaid reimbursement represents a critical lever for sustainability and workforce growth. Services provided by Certified Peer Support Specialists, licensed clinical social workers, and licensed professional counselors can be billed to Medicaid when delivered as part of an integrated behavioral health or community support service plan. The state should work with the New Mexico Human Services Department to align school-based housing navigation and peer support services with Medicaid behavioral health benefit categories. This creates a sustainable funding stream independent of annual school district budgets. Simultaneously, the state should prioritize Certified Peer Support Specialist certifications through New Mexico's behavioral health workforce development initiatives and pursue federal workforce development funding to support training and credentialing of school-based housing navigators and peer support specialists, particularly in rural and Tribal communities.

6. Integrate Community Schools and School-Based Health Center Infrastructure

School-based housing navigators should be embedded within broader community school or school-based health center infrastructure that connects students and families to health services, social supports, and housing resources through partnerships with local providers. The state should prioritize school districts that commit to developing

or expanding community school models or school-based health centers. Districts should hire housing navigators as key positions within this broader infrastructure, not as isolated add-ons.

7. Ensure Behavioral Health Integration and Workforce Capacity

Housing instability is deeply intertwined with behavioral health challenges including depression, anxiety, trauma, and substance use. Yet New Mexico faces a severe shortage of behavioral health professionals. The state should create a Behavioral Health Workforce Loan Forgiveness Program that prioritizes funding for therapists, psychiatrists, and peer support specialists willing to provide services in underserved and rural communities. Expand telehealth and integrated behavioral health models in schools to increase access without requiring on-site specialists. Training standards for school-based housing navigators should include trauma informed practice, suicide prevention, and substance use brief intervention so navigators can recognize and respond to behavioral health crises.

8. Center LGBTQ+ Youth and Prevent Trafficking and Exploitation

LGBTQ+ youth represent a disproportionate share of the young homeless population. Family rejection, school discrimination, and lack of safe housing options are drivers. All school-based housing navigators and social workers should complete LGBTQ+ affirming practice training. Schools should establish partnerships with LGBTQ+ affirming housing providers so young people have safe placement options. Young people experiencing homelessness are at elevated risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking. School-based housing navigators need training to recognize warning signs, understand mandatory reporting requirements, and connect young people to trafficking specific services. Data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity in school homeless counts should be implemented so the state can track whether LGBTQ+ youth are being identified and served proportionally.

9. Support Transition Planning for Youth Aging Out of School Systems

Young people experiencing homelessness often face additional barriers at age 18 or upon leaving school. They lose access to school-based supports, many youth-focused housing programs serve only those under 18, and federal foster care supports end at age 21. Schools should implement transition planning starting at age 14, helping students secure stable housing, establish benefit eligibility, connect with adult social services, and understand their rights. School districts should have written transition plans for all McKinney-Vento students age 14 and older, coordinating with adult serving housing and social service agencies.

10. Center Indigenous and Tribal Youth and Ensure Community Representation

Native American youth and families are overrepresented in New Mexico's homeless population. School-based housing programs should include training on Tribal sovereignty, Tribal child welfare law, and Tribal state consultation requirements. Establish explicit partnerships with Tribal education departments and Tribal housing authorities. Hiring should prioritize Tribal members and reflect Tribal leadership. Ground training and practice in Indigenous values of community, family, and collective responsibility. New Mexico is linguistically and culturally diverse. Housing navigation materials, training, and services should be available in Spanish, Indigenous languages, and other relevant languages. Hiring and leadership structures should prioritize people from the communities served, recognizing that shared lived experience and cultural grounding are forms of professional expertise.

Family Stabilization Program: Evidence of What Is Possible and Lessons for Scaling

The Innovation and the Conditions That Shaped It

The Family Stabilization Program operates as a housing stabilization initiative providing rapid, relational, and flexible support to families and unaccompanied youth experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Operating across multiple school districts and communities, the program delivers direct financial assistance, emergency housing support, living condition improvements, and access to basic needs, fundamentally demonstrating that rapid intervention paired with community partnership prevents homelessness and interrupts cycles of instability.

In a single implementation period, the program produced measurable outcomes including housing stabilization and eviction prevention; improvements in housing quality and safety through repairs and habitability improvements; access to basic household necessities and material stability; improved food security and health related stability; increased educational engagement and stability for children and youth; and notable improvements in family wellbeing, dignity, and reduced crisis burden. Families consistently report relief from constant housing insecurity, reduced stress, and increased ability to focus on long term goals such as employment, education, and child development.

The program also generated meaningful community level impacts by strengthening housing continuity, preserving neighborhood stability, and reinforcing local support systems. Resources flowed to local landlords, property owners, contractors, plumbers, electricians, and small businesses directly involved in stabilizing housing conditions. By keeping families housed, connected, and engaged within their communities of origin, and by reinvesting resources into local service providers, the program reinforced both social and structural stability.

Recommendations for Statewide Systemic Change

1. Expand Family Stabilization as a Statewide Priority with Adequate Funding

The Family Stabilization Program has demonstrated that rapid housing intervention prevents homelessness and enables families to remain stable within their communities. The Legislature should expand this program statewide with sustained funding separate from emergency shelter and transitional housing appropriations. Funding should be distributed equitably across urban, rural, and Tribal communities, with explicit attention to meeting the needs of families in hidden homelessness (doubled-up situations, motels, overcrowded housing) who are harder to identify but equally vulnerable.

2. Standardize Rapid Financial Assistance and Low Barrier Service Delivery Models

The program's success rests on rapid deployment of flexible financial assistance (rent, deposits, utilities, emergency household items) paired with low barrier access. Statewide implementation should establish standardized protocols that enable funds to be deployed in days rather than weeks. Families should be able to access assistance regardless of credit history, income variability, or prior housing records. Eligibility should be simplified and documentation requirements minimized, recognizing that the most vulnerable families often lack standard documentation (leases, utility bills, proof of income).

3. Build Budget Forecasting and Spend Down Scaling Tools

Implementing standardized budget forecasting and spend down scaling tools will enable the program to more accurately align financial resources with participant enrollment over time. Structured models that project expenditures against phased enrollment targets allow program managers to anticipate funding needs, avoid under or over utilization of funds, and make informed decisions about when to onboard new participants. This approach replaces reactive decision making with data driven planning.

4. Establish Housing First Principles and Landlord Partnership Models

The program should be grounded in Housing First principles: rapid connection to stable housing as the primary intervention, minimization of preconditions for assistance, and recognition that housing stability supports all other outcomes including education, employment, and health. Programs should establish relationships with landlords willing to rent to program participants, serve as liaisons between families and property owners, and create reliable

networks of housing partners. Flexible funding should be used to reduce perceived risk for landlords through damage mitigation funds, signing bonuses, or short-term guarantees.

5. Integrate with School-Based Housing Navigation and McKinney-Vento Liaisons

The Family Stabilization Program should be coordinated with school-based housing navigators and McKinney-Vento liaisons so that young people identified as experiencing homelessness in schools have rapid access to stabilization funds. Liaisons should have clear protocols for referring families to the program, coordinating support, and tracking outcomes. This integration ensures that school identification of housing instability leads to rapid intervention.

6. Invest in Community Partnerships and Relational Infrastructure

The program's success depends on trust between families, schools, housing providers, and community organizations. Statewide implementation should invest in the relational infrastructure that makes coordination possible, including cross sector collaboration, peer support networks, reflective supervision, and opportunities for ongoing relationship building across organizations and regions. Community conversations and learning networks should be sustained so that practitioners can share emerging practices and strengthen coordinated responses.

7. Recognize and Support the Generational Impact of Housing Stability

The program is producing early but meaningful generational impacts by interrupting cycles of housing instability that directly affect children, youth, and family systems over time. When families are stabilized quickly, students are more likely to remain enrolled in school, maintain attendance, and avoid the compounding effects of school mobility. This stability supports improved academic engagement and reduces educational gaps. Families who previously experienced repeated housing crises were able to establish a more stable baseline, reducing chronic stress within the household and supporting better child development outcomes and long-term resilience. Future investments should explicitly measure and document these generational impacts, recognizing that preventing homelessness today means preventing intergenerational poverty and instability tomorrow.

8. Expand Housing Quality and Habitability Improvements

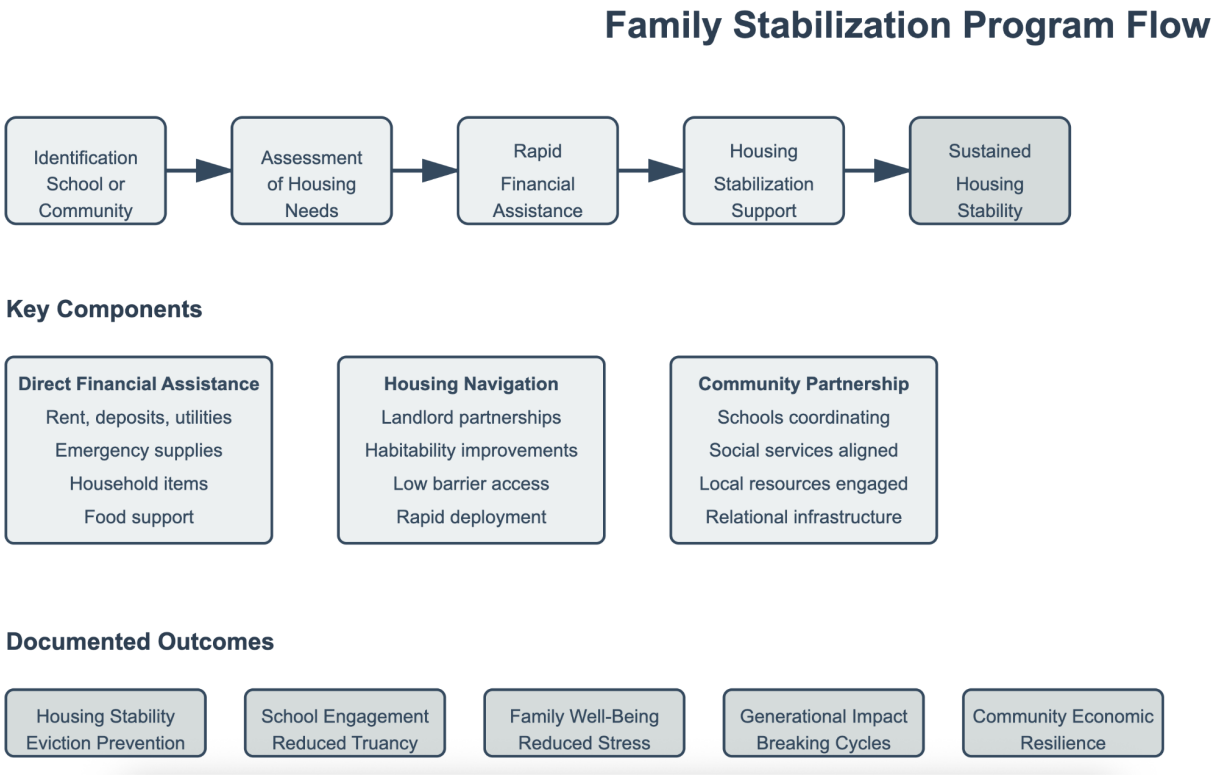
Beyond rent assistance, the program should expand resources for living condition improvements including repairs, mold remediation, electrical and heating fixes, plumbing restoration, and general habitability improvements. These investments directly improve health and safety outcomes, especially for households previously living without reliable plumbing, heat, or safe sleeping conditions. Habitability improvements should be viewed as health and safety investments, not luxuries.

9. Develop Culturally Grounded Practices and Community Leadership

The program should operate according to cultural values of relationship, reciprocity, and collective responsibility. Staff should be hired from the communities served. Families should be treated with dignity and respect, and program design should honor both the strengths families bring and the complexity of their situations. In New Mexico, this means explicitly recognizing and respecting cultural traditions of multigenerational and extended family living while distinguishing voluntary, stable, culturally grounded arrangements from housing driven by necessity and hardship. Program practices should be informed by New Mexico's historical and contemporary wisdom about community care.

10. Measure Outcomes and Sustain Evaluation for Continuous Improvement

Statewide implementation should include systematic data collection and evaluation to understand program impacts, identify emerging needs, and strengthen service quality. Outcome measures should include housing stability, school engagement, family well-being, and intergenerational impacts. Evaluation should incorporate meaningful participation from families and young people with lived experience of homelessness and housing instability. Evaluation findings should inform continuous quality improvement and policy decisions.



Building on New Mexico's Strengths

The recommendations in this document reflect a consistent truth: New Mexico's communities, practitioners, organizations, and systems already possess remarkable strength, wisdom, and commitment. The innovations described here (Communities of Practice, Winter Readiness, Domestic Violence Facility Investments, School-Based Housing Navigation, and Family Stabilization) emerged from recognizing and building upon what is already present in the state.

Future work should focus not on creating entirely new systems, but on strengthening, connecting, and sustaining the assets that exist throughout New Mexico. This means continuing to invest in relationships, communities of practice, cultural knowledge, lived expertise, and collective capacities that allow people, organizations, and communities to respond effectively to complex challenges. It means ensuring that workforce development extends beyond technical training to encompass the relational, cultural, and spiritual dimensions that make practice sustainable and effective. It means recognizing that progress in New Mexico happens at the pace of relationship, and that systems work best when grounded in trust, dignity, and genuine accountability to the communities they serve.

The families and young people experiencing housing instability in New Mexico are not problems to be solved. They are members of our communities deserving of dignity, stability, and opportunity. The practitioners, leaders, and community members working to support them are not passive implementers of external mandates. They are experts whose knowledge, creativity, and commitment should guide both policy and practice.

As New Mexico moves forward, continued investment in these approaches will contribute to a more connected, resilient, and community-centered homelessness response system. By building upon the strengths already present throughout the state, and by listening to and learning from communities most affected by housing instability, New Mexico can create systems where all people have access to stable housing, adequate resources, and the support they need to thrive.

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