



The **New Mexico Rural Summit** at the Roundhouse on May 12 and 13, 2022 brought together 360 bipartisan rural leaders from across the state including tribal leaders, Mayors, County Commissioners, Legislators and advocates.

This **first of a kind summit** provided rural leaders an opportunity to weigh in on *infrastructure, education, public safety and health, economic development, behavioral health, wildfire and flooding mitigation, acequia and land grants, agricultural support, and natural resources.*



This summit was a result of debilitating job loss and opportunity, crumbling infrastructure and vast attrition experienced in our state.

Why was it important to NM?

New Mexico's rural communities are diverse microcosms from our immigrant populations living in the colonias areas; our agricultural rich communities along the Rio Grande; our generational Hispanic families in northern NM; our sovereign tribal nations, and our oil and gas communities in northwest and southeast NM. Unfortunately, many of these communities face dire conditions and a lack of basic

infrastructure— a key mission the Rural Economic Opportunity Task Force has been tasked with solving.

In follow up meetings and discussions with White House and Department officials, they believe The New Mexico Rural Summit could become a road-map for addressing inequity in rural America and ensuring funds from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act meet rural communities in this great time of need—which hasn't seen a major investment since the Eisenhower administration.

Who was in attendance?

The summit welcomed *Under Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development Xochitl Torres Small; Deputy Secretary of US Transportation Arlando Teller; Maine Speaker of the House Ryan Fecteau; Arizona Representative Daniel Hernandez; Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard; Edyael Casaperalta, Senior Policy Advisor, Rural Utilities Service, USDA; Judge Jason Lidyard, New Mexico First Judicial District Court; David Abbey, Executive Director of the Legislative Finance Committee; Donnie Quintana, Director of Local Government's Division (DFA); Secretary Sonya Smith of NM Dept of Veterans Affairs and Secretary Katrina Hotrum-Lopez for Aging and Long-Term Services, and Gov. Mark Mitchell, Chairman of the All Pueblo Council of Governors.*



The online viewership for this summit neared close to 2,000 individuals per day.

Critical Areas that we focused on?

Attendees were asked to provide critical feedback concerning areas of interest they would like the summit to focus on. The summit held group sessions on the following:

Embracing Rural America

A national panel on the challenges and opportunities facing Rural America

New Mexico on Fire: from Prevention to Action

This round table focused on statewide challenges with wildfires threatening watersheds, national and state forests, and what communities can do to prepare and recover.

Healthcare and Emergency Access in Rural NM

Behavioral Health: Managing a growing crisis with Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino moderating

Aging in Rural New Mexico: Nuestros Viejitos y Los Veteranos with Senator Harold Pope moderating

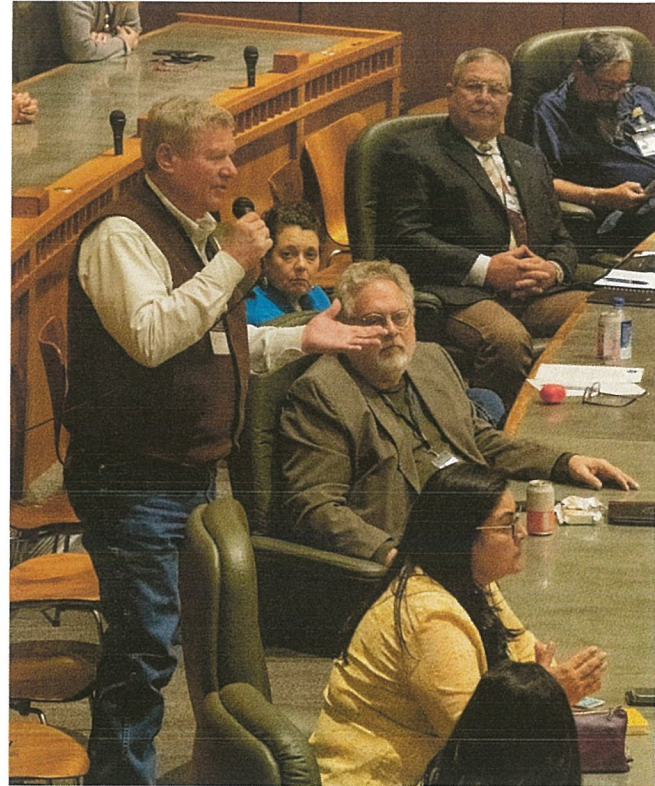
Access Denied-Bringing Emergency access to Rural NM

Rural Funding 101- Navigating partners and politics

Prosper NM- A roadmap for economic opportunity

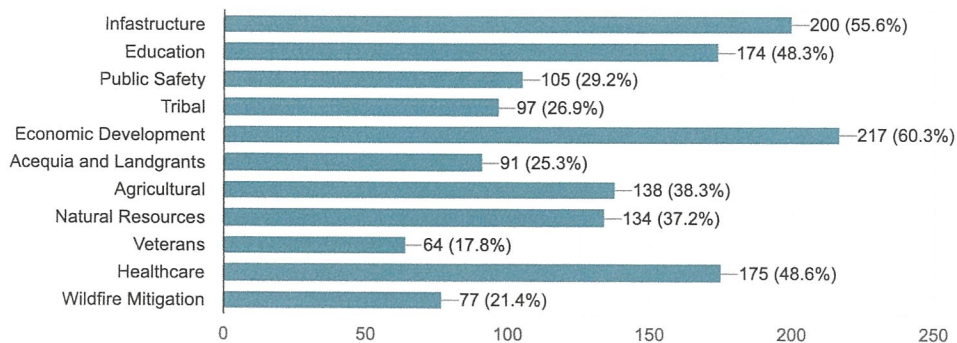
How to rebuild New Mexico and the economic development opportunities that exist and must be created in New Mexico.

Growing NM- Water & Agriculture



What areas are you most interested in?

360 responses



Seven potential areas for Legislation, as determined by the NM Rural Summit:

1) **Council of Governments Support and funding of grant writing staff** - With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and other consequential pieces of federal legislation including ARPA, rural governments will be required to apply for competitive grants. One take away from the summit was that many of our small communities and unincorporated entities lack this basic infrastructure. Funding the COGs will help provide a critical and needed service to ensure our rural communities receive their fair share of funding through Justice 40 and other federal programs.



2) **EMT Transfer bill** - Health advocates stated that local EMS services are not allowed to transport medical patients from their point of pick-up to a local hospital with a private EMT service. Local EMS entities are required to meet their private counterpart in a parking lot or along the road, transfer the patient into their care and then allow the private EMT to continue with the transport of said patient. Many healthcare advocates on the panel said this was dangerous to the patient, could potentially increase liability to the city or county entity and is a waste of valuable time in critical emergencies.

3) **CPSW Behavioral Health** - With the rising challenges of behavioral health within our rural communities, CPSWs play a critical role in providing support to those with addictions and behavioral health challenges. Increased funding and support for these localized entities could help lower our addiction and behavioral health challenges within rural

communities without medical care or services.

4) Statewide Rural Emergency Response Director or Embud – The wildfires of 2022 proved how unprepared the state was to address disasters within rural communities. The lack of regional equipment such as generators, clean drinking water, water to fight waters, water purification systems, portable cell tower systems and heavy equipment to fight these fires proved catastrophic. The red tape and the various levels of bureaucracy increased the time needed to deploy critical care and supplies for citizens and firefighters.

A Rural Emergency Response Director or Embud would help coordinate all necessary needs and services within a community to address any future emergency. They will be our state's version of a FEMA Director to ensure critical services, equipment, recovery and clean up efforts and support are carried out effectively and efficiently.

5) Communities in schools - Our most attended breakout session spoke to the dire need for social emotional wellness and behavioral health services in rural schools. They are hopeful they could be included in the Early childhood constitutional amendment that would allow them to provide an expansion of services, while bringing equity in tandem with school based health centers.

6) Staff funding for the Rural Equity Embud

7) Rural and local Detox and long term residential treatment centers and transitional housing (like the Espanola Pathways motel in Espanola as an example) – Participants spoke of the dire need for these services within rural communities. Programs that work with diversion, drug court and existing intercepts (wraparound services) that have proven effective in the rehabilitation of low level offenders. This will provide fertile ground for certified Peer Support workers CPSW's to enter the social work field pathway where more social workers and community health workers are in demand.

Where do we go now?

The Rural Summit is in preparation for returning in 2023. Critical discussions are continually being held in Washington, DC with White House and Department officials on how best we can deploy assets from the IRA and other critical pieces of legislation.

There are ongoing talks to merge this summit into a statewide or regional advocacy endeavor. Those plans will be released later this fall with potential drafts of legislation.