



NEW MEXICO **WOMEN**.ORG

Advancing Opportunities for Women and Girls.

GENDER JUSTICE AT THE HEART OF NEW MEXICO'S PANDEMIC RECOVERY

WHY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC NEEDS A GENDER EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

As the world and our community here in New Mexico struggle with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, NewMexicoWomen.Org (NMW.O), the statewide women's fund, seeks to offer a gender justice perspective on the current pandemic and recovery process. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare, in the most devastating of ways, existing structural inequalities throughout our state. These existing inequities mean that self-identifying women, tribal communities, communities of color, the LGBTQIA community, and rural and immigrant communities throughout the state are being disproportionately impacted by the crisis.

Cases of domestic violence are on the rise, reproductive rights and access to abortion care are at risk, food insecurity is increasing, and women are being further strained by the numerous uncompensated and invisible caregiving roles they are continually expected to fulfill. The impact of COVID-19 is not equally shared across our communities. As a result, any meaningful recovery plan to this pandemic must be rooted in racial, economic, and gender justice to foster the deeper structural shifts required for longer-term equity.

NMW.O defines gender justice as a commitment to end inequities between all genders and ensure equitable access to power, knowledge, and resources. Gender justice encompasses social, economic, and environmental justice issues and recognizes that gender oppression is connected to one's sex, gender, race, class, ability, immigration status, and beyond. A gender justice analysis also acknowledges that men, trans individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals are also constrained by patriarchal gender roles and norms.

Toward a vision of long-term equity, NMW.O offers the recommendations listed below. From our position as New Mexico's statewide women's fund, our recommendations are intersectional and multidimensional in their scope and informed by the needs of our community partners around the state. As new data emerges related to COVID-19, these recommendations will likely evolve to reflect that changing landscape. The intention is for these recommendations to reach beyond the philanthropic community and inform decision-making across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors. Individuals in these institutions can use these recommendations and take further action by voting, supporting legislation, policy, and policymakers aligned with these recommendations, and acting in solidarity with those most vulnerable, to ensure a just recovery. For the full description of these recommendations, see page 16.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Center and trust women's expertise and leadership in all COVID-19 recovery plans.
2. Support policies, legislation, and policymakers seeking to redress past inequities and foster women's and community health and economic well-being by raising the minimum wage to a living wage and ensuring paid family leave for all workers.
3. Avoid austerity measures that will have harmful impacts on women and their communities and exacerbate recession.
4. Support women and women-of-color-owned businesses and enterprises.
5. Support advocacy and policy efforts toward ensuring universal healthcare access.
6. Reorient our economies toward sustainable industries and livelihoods rooted in community control and ownership.
7. Fund nonprofit organizations led by and serving the most impacted communities—self-identifying women and girls of color, indigenous women, women in low-income and rural communities, immigrant women, and the LGBTQIA community.
8. Fund community organizing, advocacy, and indigenous community responses as they are the most effective ways to create long-term change.
9. Create pathways and pipelines for women and women-of-color leadership at the policy level, in foundations, and in other positions of power.
10. Educate policy and decision-makers regarding gender, race, and colonization.

"Those most impacted must continue to be prioritized as leaders and experts, not passive "target" audiences. Women-led organizations must be prioritized, women of color and minority women led organizations in particular. Our communities are at greater risk and can no longer be treated as passive information or program repositories for outdated, poorly thought-out patriarchal approaches to health and well-being. Now is the time for change. The most creative and responsive thing that can be done right now is to fund and trust women of color and minority women led organizations. Let women lead; we absolutely know how to get things done and how to care for others while doing so." -Black Health New Mexico



CONTEXTUALIZING THE GENDER AND RACE BASED IMPACTS OF COVID-19

As mentioned, the disproportionate manner in which COVID-19 is impacting various communities across New Mexico reveals preexisting structural inequalities along lines of race, gender, and socio-economic class. Our layered history of colonization and structural racism in New Mexico have resulted in health inequities that have led to the Native American community bearing the brunt of the impact of the pandemic. Further, across the country, deeply entrenched systems of patriarchy and structural racism mean that women of color are more likely to be doing essential jobs than anyone else, whether as cashiers, home healthcare aides, or emergency room nurses. Women—especially women of color—are the front lines tackling this national crisis.¹ Indeed, “The work they do has often been underpaid and undervalued—an unseen labor force that keeps the country running and takes care of those most in need, whether or not there is a pandemic.”²

In 2017, NMW.O published a two-part report, [The Heart of Gender Justice in New Mexico: Intersectionality, Economic Security, and Health Equity](#). This community-informed research emphasized how root causes such as colonizationⁱ, patriarchyⁱⁱ, and structural racismⁱⁱⁱ have affected the well-being of women and their communities. The qualitative and quantitative data from this report provide a relevant backdrop that contextualizes the underlying reasons why certain communities are being impacted disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic and why a gender and racial equity analysis must be at the center of any meaningful recovery plan. Below is a brief overview of some of the findings from the 2017 report.

NMW.O’s 2017 research indicated that Native American women are more than twice as likely to live below the poverty line than their White female peers, who in turn, are already at a disadvantage to men.³ Further, our research found that race and ethnicity are closely linked to having access to insurance coverage, healthcare services, and preventative reproductive health screenings. Regarding access to health care, our data showed that only 67% of Native American women have a personal healthcare provider—the lowest rate across the races that were examined.⁴

i. **Colonization** can be defined as a form of invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The result is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This dispossession is often legalized after the fact and upheld through institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature unequal and benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized (definition from the Interaction Institute for Social Change).

ii. **Patriarchy** is characterized by current and historic unequal power relations between men, women, and gender non-conforming people; whereby women and gender non-conforming people are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. This is particularly noticeable in government and corporate institutions, where men dominate and hold most of the positions of power. Patriarchy is also upheld and expressed by high rates of male violence against women and gender non-conforming people. Patriarchy also negatively impacts men through harmful and limited gender roles and social norms.

iii. **Structural Racism** is a sweeping system in which public policies, institutional norms, cultural symbols, social practices, and interpersonal relations work to maintain and perpetuate racial inequities that systematically privilege white people over people of color. Racism is a feature of all the institutions and social structures in which we exist, sometimes in ways that have become so normal they are almost invisible.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADDRESSING COVID-19

While thorough data disaggregated by gender is not yet available, the outcome of such health inequities today means the Native American community in New Mexico is being the most adversely impacted. Fifty-eight percent of COVID-19 cases in our state are found in tribal communities, while Native Americans comprise only 11% of the total population. Further, the death rate from COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation is reportedly almost twice as high as the average for the rest of the world.⁶

NMW.O's 2017 research found that adult women in single-parent households with children under the age of six are over four times more likely to live in poverty than two-parent households without preschoolers.⁷

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADDRESSING COVID-19

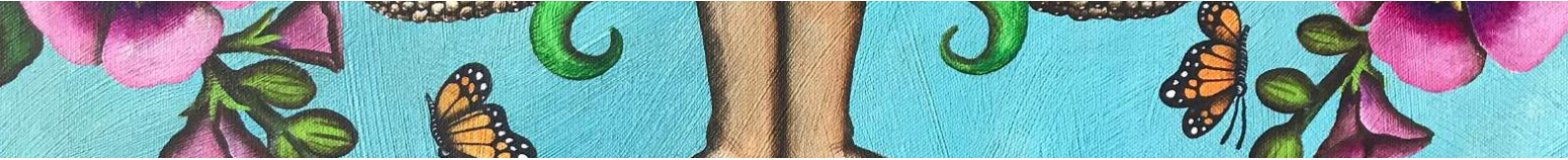
Today, this means that single mothers who were already struggling economically are now being pushed to the economic brink, all while caring for their children and other family members.

While many sectors in the formal economy are at a standstill due to the pandemic, some aspects of our economy, and nearly all areas of caregiving work, are in overdrive.⁸ Most lower-wage essential jobs and caregiving roles are fulfilled by women. In NMW.O's 2017 research, women described how their work as caregivers is persistently invisible and undervalued, both in the sense that it is not compensated and is seen as an implicit function fulfilled by women. Unfortunately, we know that, "Caregiving, associated with and expected of women, is necessary for economic production to take place; and yet it is split off from economic production, thereby structurally subordinating women in society. This is why even within their own racial, indigenous status, and economic groups, women are the most marginalized."⁹

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADDRESSING COVID-19

Today, women in many of our communities have never been busier, as they take care of loved ones, home school children, prepare and share food, check in on friends and family, organize mutual aid efforts, and creatively problem solve to tackle the enormous social and economic burdens of this pandemic. Women are often being called upon to do even more work in our communities, but with even less financial compensation.

The findings above provide a snapshot of the preexisting gendered and racialized inequalities that shape the impacts of COVID-19 on communities statewide. As we respond to the immediate needs of this crisis and begin the process of long-term recovery, we must work with community leaders to ensure that both policies and resource distribution are centered around a gender and race analysis and that they redress these preexisting inequalities. Back to business as usual is not the just solution for New Mexican communities.



A SNAPSHOT OF STATEWIDE GENDER JUSTICE RESPONSES TO COVID-19

From March to May of 2020, NMW.O connected with grantee partners around the state through one-on-one calls, emails, and a virtual grantee town hall. These incredible community organizations continue their powerful work for gender and social justice across service and issue areas, in the face of immense difficulties from the pandemic. Below are snapshots of both the challenges these organizations are facing and the creative solutions they are employing in response.

Supporting Access to Reproductive and General Healthcare Needs

Prior to the pandemic, public health experts warned that years of budget cuts to the public health system, resulting in the elimination of more than 55,000 positions nationally from 2008 to 2017, have left state and local health departments deeply vulnerable and unprepared for public health crises, such as a pandemic.¹⁰ The result is an acutely compromised local and national public health infrastructure. Dr. Patricia Trujillo, Director of Equity and Diversity at Northern New Mexico College, highlighted these gaps and asked, “Why doesn’t Rio Arriba County—or all New Mexico counties—have a women’s health services department? Why don’t they have a public health communications position? Why isn’t women’s health at the center of city, county, state, and tribal government?”

More specifically, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to health care is often influenced by a variety of factors already mentioned above, including one’s race or ethnicity, rural or urban location, health insurance access, and immigration status.¹¹ Our state’s history of colonization and structural racism is now resulting in profound health disparities. The Navajo Nation, an area the size of West Virginia,¹² contains five hospitals compared with West Virginia’s 65 hospitals.¹³ Although the population size between the two areas varies significantly, the lack of access to health care is unacceptable. Additionally, after the Native American community, the Hispanic community in New Mexico is the next highest impacted by COVID-19 infection rates, at a rate higher than their White peers.¹⁴ Finally, nationally, the African American community is also facing higher risks from COVID-19 due to preexisting structural inequalities and structural racism in access to health care.¹⁵

Further, reproductive health care specifically has been limited and restricted in a variety of ways. In terms of abortion care, many states have used the pandemic as an opportunity to limit access to abortion services, framing them as nonessential, rather than on the spectrum of essential reproductive needs spanning from pregnancy to childbirth.¹⁶ Fortunately, New Mexico has not seen any attempts to limit abortion procedures. However, in terms of pregnancy and birthing, many women are afraid to access nonemergency care in a hospital setting. Simultaneously, the medical system is overburdened in some communities or closed to non-COVID-19 related patients. As a result, community organizations providing birthing and midwifery services are seeing a significant increase in clients seeking their services.

Breath of My Heart Birthplace

"We have seen a significant increase in demand for services as the medical system becomes burdened by the pandemic. We are continuing all essential programming including our direct midwifery services, walk-in prenatal clinic (with infection control modifications), and food distribution program. We are providing increased well-newborn care as the primary care system becomes less accessible for babies who are well, including metabolic screening, heart defect screening, and feeding/lactation services. We are purchasing hearing screening equipment for newborns that cannot be screened in the hospital setting. This will allow our midwives to provide screening that would otherwise be delayed due to the pandemic." -Breath of My Heart Birthplace, Española

Black Health New Mexico

"We work to address, through multi-sector advocacy and education, the health disparity areas that disproportionately impact Black people in New Mexico. As we now know, preexisting "conditions" such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes—and the primary condition really is the impact that racism has on our bodies and lives—predispose us to heightened risks of COVID-19 contraction and complications." -Black Health New Mexico

Casa de Salud

"Our primary care clinicians are seeing patients, and we are also continuing to work with people who use drugs or who are seeking treatment for opioid addictions. While we are doing this, we are also doing advocacy work which feels really important now. We had team members push county and state on safely getting folks out of jails and prisons during this pandemic and try to create more transparency on COVID testing as people were getting "free" tests, but then were told they could get a bill from the ER. We are also trying to get free COVID testing here at the South Valley and pushing for increased health insurance options for our patients." -Anjali Taneja, Casa de Salud, Albuquerque

Supporting Women's Economic Security and Economic Justice

In an economic context where women are already more likely to work in lower-paid industries¹⁷ and, simultaneously, are paid less than their male peers,¹⁸ the economic impacts of COVID-19 are deeply gendered. Further, women-of-color are even more likely to be in lower-paid industries and experience an even more profound and persistent wage gap.¹⁹ In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, data from the Bureau of Labor has shown that unemployment rates nationally are rising the fastest for Hispanic and Black women.²⁰ Further, recent national data has shown that Black women are twice as likely as White men to have been furloughed, laid off, or had their hours or pay reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹ Such disaggregated data does not yet exist for all races, nor is it available for New Mexico, but it is likely other

women of color in New Mexico will also experience significant harmful economic impacts stemming from the pandemic. Further, for undocumented and refugee women, the loss of livelihoods can be compounded by a lack of access to federal and state emergency relief resources and benefits.

DreamSpring

“Many of the women-owned small businesses that DreamSpring serves are mom-and-pop shops, rural enterprises, food trucks, and other businesses owned by low-to-moderate-income and minority households. They often operate with cash flows that, if interrupted, can only sustain the business for a few days. Due to COVID-19, these individuals and families are experiencing unprecedented shock as their doors close for the foreseeable future. DreamSpring has developed a COVID-19 Small Business Response program to provide immediate relief—and lasting opportunity—to women-owned small businesses in New Mexico including relief payments, affordable capital, interest-only payments, and assisting with processing Small Business Administration loans.” -DreamSpring

Southwest Creations Collaborative

“Southwest Creations is considered an essential business because of our work making products for shipping and pharmaceutical supply chains. In this role, we are responding to local and national demand for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like masks and gowns by collaborating with the Bernalillo County Fire Department to produce over 4,000 units per week. This allows for the distribution of PPE to service providers, while providing dignified full-time employment for 35 women. Ensuring worker safety, we are implementing protocols for social distancing, telecommuting, and facilities sanitation.”
-Southwest Creations Collaborative, Albuquerque

Southwest Organizing Project

“SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP) is collaborating with New Mexico Women's Global Pathways and Casa Fortaleza to employ 40 seamstresses from the refugee and immigrant communities at a fair wage to sew masks for underserved populations in response to the COVID-19 crisis. SWOP started fundraising to help pay for supplies and help refugee and immigrant seamstresses sustain their livelihoods. They have not and won't receive stimulus checks or unemployment, so they need support. The masks will be collaboratively distributed with Pueblo Action Alliance, Transwoman Empowerment, Resource Reentry Center, Street Safe, and Crossroads for Women.”
-SouthWest Organizing Project's Con Mujeres Campaign, Albuquerque

Supporting Access to Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

Across the state, the stay-at-home orders have meant that women experiencing domestic violence have had to stay inside and at home with their abusers, often weighing the consequences of seeking help and potentially being exposed to COVID-19 with the potential violence they will experience if they stay in their homes. For example, in the context of the pandemic, “domestic violence incidents in Bernalillo County reportedly jumped 78 percent—right in line with soaring unemployment, gun sales, and other predictors of abuse.”²² As NMW.O’s partners at the Otero/Lincoln County Sexual Assault and Nurse Examiner Program in Alamogordo described, “We know that rates of domestic violence are rising for obvious reasons, but our case load has not gone up accordingly, so we fear people are at home and are not reaching out for services.”

Otero/Lincoln County Sexual Assault & Nurse Examiner Program

“We are still providing a full range of sexual assault and domestic violence services utilizing the check and triage. Our nurses are using masks and offering masks to patients. We are brainstorming outreach ideas and making sure that people are aware that we are still here providing services as usual.” -Otero/Lincoln County Sexual Assault and Nurse Examiner Program, Alamogordo

Strengthening Nations

“To assist with emergency shelter, Strengthening Nations is partnering with a local hotel that was providing emergency shelter to our clients prior to the pandemic. This is an immediate solution to ensure women and children are in a safe environment and not homeless, nor without choices during the pandemic. Each family or individual will have their own room to maintain social distancing and safety. During this transition, an advocate is working with families individually on transitional housing goals to make their transition from the hotel room to housing as supportive and easy as possible.” -Strengthening Nations, Gallup

Supporting Healthy Masculinity Work

In NMW.O’s 2017 research, participants raised the topic of “toxic masculinity,” referring to damaging notions of masculinity that are rooted in domination, violence, competition, and limited forms of acceptable emotionality.²³ Participants noted these behaviors have harmful consequences for women, as well as men. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing these behaviors enacted by the current President and White House Administration in their refusal to listen to and comply with public health experts, their divisive approach to supporting local leaders, and their lack of coordinated and functional response to the pandemic. The consequences of this type of masculinity are life threatening as, “Leaders who are more concerned with preserving a macho public image put our lives at risk as they prove their manhood by showing resistance to experts’ opinions, hypersensitivity to criticism, and constant feuding with anyone who seems to disagree with them.”²⁴ This type of leadership results, not only in poor

decision-making, but also has been shown to create dysfunctional institutions and systems that crumble in times of crisis.²⁵

Healthy Masculinities Collaborative

“While our in-person gatherings and circles are no longer possible, given the relevance of healthy masculinity in the current pandemic, Together for Brothers, Tewa Women United, the Transgender Resource Center of NM, NM Health Equity Partnership, and NewMexicoWomen.Org continue our collaborative work. During our most recent virtual gathering, we explored what healthy masculinity looks like during this time of crisis. Some examples included: young men asking each other what help they each need, with the expectation that we all need help; being okay with not having all the answers or not having full control of things right now; being compassionate and vulnerable with one another; being calm and reassuring for one’s family; and reaching out and connecting with other men and one’s community.” -Healthy Masculinities Collaborative

Supporting the Immigrant Community

NMW.O’s 2017 research indicated that undocumented immigration status and lack of Spanish language healthcare services constrain women’s access to health care.²⁶ Participants described how access and willingness to use the local healthcare system is often dependent upon and shaped by relationships of trust. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, that means undocumented women and their families are often afraid to seek out health care. Additionally, it means that while contributing to the economy and paying taxes,²⁷ these women will not receive any government support or benefits. As Anjali Taneja at Casa de Salud in Albuquerque described, “Because many of our patients are undocumented, by definition, they will not be able to access \$1,200 checks from the stimulus bill. The ways in which a lot of our population are financially being affected without other resources is hard.”

Encuentro

“Our teachers and staff have mobilized and are personally calling over 300 students each week to offer companionship; assess family stability; and provide information, referrals, and resources where we can because many of our families are undocumented or have mixed documentation status, and they are in crises. We have established a COVID-19 immigrant family fund for the community—it is the tip of the iceberg, but we are working to triage the most urgent needs.” -Encuentro, Albuquerque

Supporting Food Security and Food Justice

In NMW.O's 2017 research, participants emphasized the importance of access to quality, healthy, and affordable food, which is tied closely to socio-economic status.²⁸ One-third of New Mexico's counties are classified as food deserts. Many rural and Tribal residents drive as many as 70 miles each way to access the closest grocery store. The cost of food in rural contexts is also deeply prohibitive; for example, a basket of food that costs \$55 in an urban setting costs \$85 in a smaller-scale, rural setting.²⁹ All of these inequalities are compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic, with high grocery and gas bills, in the context of unemployment and underemployment.

Indigenous Lifeways

"On this side of the Navajo Nation, we only have a handful of grocery stores to cover hundreds of miles of land. Our community members are in desperate need of food, water, baby supplies, wood, and other supplies. Indigenous Lifeways has organized a collaborative McKinley Mutual Aid effort with four other local native-led organizations to procure, haul, package, and deliver food/water and supplies to those most at risk in our communities." -Indigenous Lifeways, Gallup

La Semilla Food Center

"We're actually able to divert a lot of what we are growing at the farm to our youth and their families. In the past, we were focusing on teaching one recipe; now we're thinking about how to optimize what we are sending home and make sure it's feeding as many people as possible. We're using a lot of the money we had for in-class sessions to purchase irrigation kits, soil, and seeds which we deliver to youth and their families to grow food at home. We're thinking about how to meet both the short-term and long-term needs—we're quickly having to adapt." -Catherine Marlene Yanez, La Semilla Food Center, Anthony

Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute

"Seeing what others in the community were doing to distribute food inspired us to get corn from last year's harvest processed into packages, and we've been sending a box each week to the senior citizens, with atole, dried posole, masa flower, and some local honey. We're getting a source of strawberries and talking about making little seed packets so people can start planting where they are, because that's something we can do while isolated." -Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute, Española and Santa Clara Pueblo

Supporting Healing, Self-Care, and Community Care

In NMW.O's 2017 research, participants across the state voiced a need for self-care and community-care practices for individuals and organizations working for social change. Participants described the often exhausting and grueling nature of their work, particularly as these individuals working to create social change are often from the communities most impacted.³⁰ There is a need to foster and build momentum for long-term self-care. Similarly, across the state, communities discussed longer-term, deeper healing from racial and colonial wounds as an underlying need and factor linked to issues impacting their communities. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many women and organizations are working extensively to address the impact of the pandemic, as well as dealing with longer-term issues and inequities that need addressing.

Tewa Women United

"What we learned during this time is the importance of community practice and collective care as well as self-care. All are needed at this time. We as communities need to deeply understand the interconnectedness of everything, and this moment uplifts that reality for us."
-Tewa Women United

NewMexicoWomen.Org

"I want us to look at three things: belonging, survival, and healing. Over the next two months and the two months after that, people are going to be reinventing the definition of who belongs, who gets to survive, and then who's responsible and how we heal together. Healing is inextricably linked to building power. That is an element that I don't want us to forget here—how are we healing ourselves and one another, when that time comes for us to be ready to heal?" -Sarah Silva, Facilitator and Coach, and NewMexicoWomen.Org Board Chair

Supporting Rural Communities

Another challenge discussed in NMW.O's 2017 research was the overall structural lack of investment and, in some cases, divestment in rural communities across New Mexico.³¹ Further, for many rural communities, access to health care is often determined by access to transportation. With a lack of health care and other services in many rural areas, people may spend hours driving to access care, or are simply not able to access care. For COVID-19 testing and treatment, this is a profound challenge and burden for communities. For example, our partners at the Empowerment Congress of Doña Ana County in Las Cruces describe how, "Working with the colonias^{iv} is already difficult as they are very cut off and transportation is a huge barrier because folks don't own vehicles and there's no public transportation. The first two weeks of COVID-19 testing in Doña Ana County was really only happening in Las Cruces."

iv. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines colonias as rural communities in close proximity to the U.S-Mexico border, lacking access to basic services such as water, sewer, or housing. Retrieved 4 November 2016 from <http://bber.unm.edu/colonias>.

Empowerment Congress of Dona Ana County

"We are shifting into digital organizing, but if we shift entirely in that direction, it's the same people who are not being served. We're really old school and we're doing phone banking for the census, and so, we're just calling people and saying, 'hey we're here.' We're part of the larger coalition and we have a referral process, so if anyone says they need something we don't have, our staff figure that out and we can refer them." -Empowerment Congress of Doña Ana County, Las Cruces

Women's Intercultural Center

"In relation to our perishable and emergency food pantry, as everyone has geared up to provide massive food distributions in the big cities like El Paso and Las Cruces, our particular services target families and individuals in the rural communities located between these two cities that do not have transportation or have other barriers to gain access to those food distributions."
-Women's Intercultural Center, Anthony

El Valle Women's Collaborative

"Since COVID-19, the unemployment rate in our community has skyrocketed to nearly 40%. However, because we are turning to ancestral knowledge and values to solve our issues, many of us know that we will be okay in the long run. An aspect of healing in our community has come through growing foods. Participation with the farm has increased greatly as people recognize the fragility of food chain supplies. More and more people are coming over to see what we are doing and bringing their families over with masks and social distancing, of course. There is a growing interest in looking at these as real solutions in our rural community." -Yvonne Sandoval, El Valle Women's Collaborative, Villanueva

Supporting the LGBTQIA Community

In NMWO's 2017 research, members of the LGBTQIA community described their experiences of discrimination, violence, fear, and isolation, stemming from patriarchal attitudes.³² Further, and compounded by discrimination, participants described challenges in accessing appropriate and compassionate health care. Overall, structural inequalities and vulnerability to discrimination place LGBTQIA people at greater risk of both health complications and economic insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic than non-LGBTQIA people.³³ For example, our partners at the Transgender Resource Center of NM in Albuquerque described how, "Before the pandemic, when we were open in a normal way, people had bathroom access. For folks who are trans and homeless, already no one will let them use the bathroom. If you are out on the street, what do you do? If you appear to be not housed, people don't want to let you in, and then trans folks get discriminated against. What are our folks supposed to do who don't have a sink?"

Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico

“The Transgender Resource Center is remaining open three days per week to fill the urgent needs of our community. We continue to provide emergency financial assistance, referrals, case management, virtual support groups, youth programming, and more. And our drop-in center is open to provide rapid HIV testing, syringe exchange, food distribution, and access to hand washing stations. We went and purchased a ton of take-out containers, so we can give people food to go and keep our staff and clients safe. The folks who access our drop-in center are overwhelmingly young transgender women of color who are experiencing homeless and major resource insecurity.” -Transgender Resource Center of NM, Albuquerque

Supporting Girls, Young Women, and Students

In terms of supporting and working with young women and girls during this time, many of NMW.O’s partners have had to pivot dramatically to online services. However, that shift comes with many equity implications, as Kiran Katira with the Anti-Racist Youth Leadership Institute in Albuquerque described, “With the pandemic, the Anti-Racist Youth Leadership Institute is going completely virtual this summer. But we worry about the youth who can’t access Wi-Fi. Will they get left out of this as well, on top of everything? Unfortunately, those without access can’t participate and that’s just deepening the inequity.” Similarly, for many, continuing their work has been challenged by limited or lack of internet access or quality. For others, their work is on hold until the crisis passes. For example, as Kim Richards at The Counseling Center in Alamogordo described, “COVID-19 has had a very crippling effect...All meetings and plans for The Mescalero Girls Circle Empowerment pilot program have been placed on hold until the Mescalero Apache Tribe opens back up to outsiders again. Despite this unavoidable situation, we are committed to following through to complete the pilot program.”

Further, school closures disproportionately impact students from low-income households and, among many effects, can lead to poor nutrition, social isolation, and increased dropout rates.³⁴ Organizations are seeking to address this, and as our partners at Mother Tongue Project in Santa Fe described, “Everything is in upheaval...We try to ensure that students, who are also young parents, do not get demoralized and keep their children’s development moving forward when they are also juggling so much.”

NMW.O’s Indicators Report published in 2014 revealed that young women who have some form of mentorship and adult guidance at home, in school, and in their community are more likely to succeed academically and have positive mental health outcomes and are less likely to be engaged in violent situations, substance use, and unsafe sex.³⁵ Organizations working with young women statewide are seeking to continue providing support to young women and girls.

Girls Inc. of Santa Fe

“Consistent contact with professionally trained adult mentors has become more important now that the girls and their families are isolated and under extreme stress from loss of income and uncertainty about the future. Girls Inc. of Santa Fe (GISF) is providing social and emotional support for local girls and connection and resources for their families through video conferencing, phone calls, and social media. Our program coordinators and facilitators are maintaining regular contact with families to offer support and other resources.” -Girls Inc. of Santa Fe

Youth Research and Resource Center

“With the COVID 19 virus, the shutdown of New Mexico’s schools means an already traumatized population is suffering more trauma. Are there going to be education cuts? What comprehensive strategy does the Department of Education and Governor have for reopening the schools, and how is trauma going to be dealt with productively? We continue to work with Juvenile Citation Program in making Juvenile Court the last resort and in implementing a trauma informed approach in the schools for our youth.” -Rory Rank, Youth Research and Resources Center, Las Cruces

Northern NM College Office of Equity and Diversity

“With our students at home, we are preparing content that can be shared with the entire family, with high and low bandwidth options. For example, part of an assignment could be to watch a video with your family and then discuss it. Or take a concept from the Chicana history we are reading and talk to your children about it, and in lieu of a written response, the assignment could be to draw a picture with them about it. We’re finding a lot of strength in creativity and collaboration with other educators.” -Northern New Mexico College Office of Equity and Diversity, Española

Supporting Communities of Color

Nearly all of the topics, challenges, and responses mentioned above are disproportionately impacting communities of color. Communities of color, and particularly the Native American community, are bearing the brunt of this pandemic as a result of preexisting health disparities and economic inequalities. These various topical areas are challenging to analyze or understand in isolation as each issue, from healthcare access to food security, is inextricably shaped by one’s race and gender.

Similar to the experience of the Native American community in New Mexico, the African American community has also experienced disproportionate rates of COVID-19 nationally.³⁶ Here in New Mexico, the Hispanic community is also experiencing higher rates of COVID-19 cases.³⁷ For these communities, this speaks to existing health and economic disparities that have rendered these communities more vulnerable.

Also, of importance, particularly in relation to COVID-19, is New Mexico's Asian American community, which often experiences racism through erasure and invisibilization within the context of New Mexico's tri-cultural myth. Further, in the context of COVID-19, the Asian American community nationally has experienced a significant increase in racist incidents³⁸ with numerous racist incidents also occurring in New Mexico.³⁹ This speaks to preexisting racial prejudices now being explicitly and overtly expressed during this time of heightened crisis and as the current White House Administration and the President use racially charged language to describe COVID-19.⁴⁰

New Mexico Asian Family Center

"We are the only agency in NM serving the Asian community. In the context of anti-Asian racism and xenophobia, we are working with our community collecting stories and connecting folks to services. We're doing a lot of education work around that and also have been talking to the mayor here in Albuquerque, and he's releasing a statement [condemning anti-Asian rhetoric and hate crimes]. Also, it's important to let folks know how and who to report incidents to. We're also shifting some of our work to supporting people during this crisis with housing, unemployment, and benefits." -New Mexico Asian Family Center, Albuquerque

Black Health New Mexico

"One key challenge that Black communities are facing is the lack of good and solid public health information and access to that information. Mainstream culture too often does not understand how to reach us in a way that honors our expertise, experience, intelligence, and context—historic and otherwise. As a result, receiving good public health information can be really challenging." -Black Health New Mexico

Healing Circle Drop-In Center

"The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the Navajo Nation very hard. The hardest hit are the families living in very rural areas where many have no running water and electricity. These are multiple family units where the transmission of the virus is guaranteed. Information on the virus is most urgent to these families. The residents listen to radio stations that are broadcasted in the Navajo language. Most of the resources on protecting self and family have been published in English. We are working to provide voice and video recordings of messages for these families on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Navajo radio stations. The teachings will be from the oral Diné traditions for all ages on self-care and survival." -Healing Circle Drop in Center, Shiprock



BUILDING A GENDER JUSTICE FUTURE

These stories and data from NMW.O's partners around the state highlight the various intersectional ways in which COVID-19 is impacting communities across New Mexico. Given what NMW.O has learned from our conversations with community and grantee partners around the state, it is clear that preexisting structural inequities are being further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that women, and especially women of color, are not only being disproportionately impacted by this crisis, but they are also more likely to be on the front lines addressing the critical needs of their communities. Concurrently, we are also seeing how organizations and communities are adapting to meet these needs and extending support beyond their usual constituents to include entire families and communities in new and innovative ways.

We stand at a juncture. As we look toward the future, we must remember that “multiple possible futures... are opened or foreclosed by our actions in the present.”⁴¹ We are in a particular moment where, as a result of profound crisis, we can and must insist on living into a just future that we have imagined and have been working toward for decades, even generations. Toward that vision of long-term equity and sustainability, NMW.O offers the recommendations listed below for a recovery response that is rooted in racial, economic, and gender justice frameworks. From our position as New Mexico's statewide women's fund, our recommendations are intersectional and multidimensional in their scope and informed by the needs of our community partners around the state. The intention is for these recommendations to reach beyond the philanthropic community and inform decision-making across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors. Individuals in these institutions can use these recommendations and take further action by voting, and supporting policies and policymakers aligned with these recommendations, and acting in solidarity with those most vulnerable, to ensure a just recovery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Center and trust women's expertise and leadership in all COVID-19 recovery plans.

In order to build a gender justice, community-informed response to COVID-19; women, and particularly women of color, from diverse communities around the state must be recognized as the experts who are responding to this crisis in their own communities and be at the table and included in key recovery conversations and policy and funding decisions. Given the implications of the pandemic on gender-based violence and rural maternal health care and that women of color fill most “essential work” roles, a gender and racial justice analysis is crucial to longer-term recovery and systemic change.

2. Support policies, legislation, and policymakers seeking to redress past inequities and foster women's and community health and economic well-being. This means centering women's health and community health in all policy decisions, regardless of whether they are health specific. Further, critical to a healthy recovery for New Mexico is raising the minimum wage to a living wage, as well as ensuring paid family leave for all workers, hazard

pay, access to affordable and decent housing, equitable internet access and digital sovereignty, and that New Mexico adequately taxes corporations.⁴² In the context of the pandemic, we see policies previously deemed impossible, such as providing secure housing or increasing pay for lower-paid “essential work,” now being proposed and implemented. Such policy shifts are not only possible but also essential to redressing inequalities and creating longer-term resiliency and well-being, so women and their communities can weather future crises.

“With COVID-19, the past few months have brought on much uncertainty and our families, children, elders and our jobs are being impacted. For long term recovery and resiliency, we know that policy change is key and here at Southwest Women’s Law Center, we are continuing our work on Paid Family and Medical Leave.” -Southwest Women’s Law Center

3. Avoid austerity measures that will have harmful impacts on women and their communities and exacerbate recession.⁴³ Instead, New Mexico should ensure there is continued and sufficient funding for social services, including those related to behavioral health, gender-based violence and sexual assault, mental health, food benefits, early childhood education, and the full spectrum of reproductive and general healthcare services.

4. Support women and women-of-color-owned businesses and enterprises. In years past, New Mexico has ranked as one of the top 10 states for women-of-color-owned businesses.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, participants in NMW.O’s 2017 research described how when businesses struggle or fold, families and communities are left with little or nothing.⁴⁵ Further, women-owned businesses still have a lower market share and often are in lower-earning industries than those owned by men. COVID-19 will have immense impacts upon small women-owned businesses critical to communities across the state. Providing them support to sustain through this crisis is essential.

5. Support advocacy and policy efforts toward ensuring universal healthcare access. Participants in NMW.O’s 2017 research discussed the need for a paradigm shift toward healthcare access as a human right and how this is both essential to the health and well-being of their communities and not part of the national dialogue.⁴⁶ The pandemic continues to expose the failures of our healthcare system and structural barriers to wellness. Universal health care is fundamentally a gender justice issue.

6. Reorient our economies towards sustainable industries and livelihoods rooted in community control and ownership. In NMW.O’s 2017 research, women from communities reliant on oil, gas, mining, and the national labs in both northern and southern areas of the state described a lack of alternative economic opportunities in their communities, the

devastating boom and bust cycles associated with some of these industries, and the overall lack of sustained, safe, and decent employment.⁴⁷ Participants also described the harmful environmental and health impacts of these industries on their communities, primarily communities of color. These factors render communities at increased risks associated with COVID-19 due to the health issues these industries cause; and these are compounded, for example, on the Navajo Nation where communities lack access to water, partially due to uranium contamination.⁴⁸ A gender justice economic recovery would look to stimulus programs specifically designed to promote racial and gender equity and informed by economic and environmental justice perspectives.

“In early April, Indigenous nonprofits and communities organized petitions and wrote letters to Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to plead with them not to vent radioactive materials into the air, especially during the pandemic. LANL postponed the venting (it didn’t cancel it). Simultaneously, women scientists at LANL are being credited with improving testing for the COVID-19 virus and getting a lot of national press. For me, sustainable livelihoods and industries for us is always about these impossible contradictions—we’ll help save your lives, northern New Mexicans, so that we can dust you with radioactive waste another day. How can a feminist analysis help us to address the contradictions?”
-Dr. Patricia Trujillo

7. Fund nonprofit organizations led by and serving the most impacted communities—self-identifying women and girls of color, indigenous women, women in low-income and rural communities, immigrant women, and the LGBTQIA community. The stories above serve as a clarion call for increased and sustained investment in organizations working for gender justice and equity in New Mexico. With only 1.6% of philanthropic dollars being directed to gender equity work nationally before the pandemic,⁴⁹ support to ensure the health and well-being of self-identifying women and girls is even more urgent now. Funders should be flexible in the short term, and support should continue for urgent needs throughout the pandemic with longer-term funding commitments to organizations serving these communities. The long-term social, economic, and political impacts of this pandemic are yet unknown and could last years. It is critical to ensure nonprofit organizations remain stable, particularly as they often fill gaps in public and private sector services.

8. Fund community organizing, advocacy, and indigenous community responses as they are the most effective ways to create long-term change. Supporting these strategies will enable communities and organizations to identify and understand the root causes of systemic inequalities, identify the best solutions for their communities, and work to shift the economic and health policies mentioned above. Our community partners have described how the networks, learning, and strategies resulting from community organizing, advocacy, and indigenous ways of knowing are carrying many communities through this

crisis. Finally, in this time of crisis, funders should support the "bold and small experiments" and creative and innovative solutions emerging from communities.

"Those who grow our food, pick our food, deliver our food, and stock the shelves are vital, essential, and should never be discarded or discounted. There are real inequities that exist on all levels. Our community-based organizations have been addressing these well before COVID, and we will be here after COVID providing the vital services our families and communities need. Now more than ever, the voices of our communities need to be heard, at the policy level and in the act of voting. This is our moment to bring into reality the transformations that can redefine our existence as a more humane, loving, caring, unified, and much more simplified presence." -Corrine Sanchez, Tewa Women United

9. Create pathways and pipelines for women and women-of-color leadership at the policy level, in foundations, and in other positions of power. Most elected officials are men, and most positions of power are still occupied by men, often those from privileged backgrounds. The results are often profound blind spots and disregard for issues impacting working women, their families, and certain communities, whether in times of crisis or not. There is a need to invest in and create pathways to leadership for women, and particularly women-of- color and women from low-income, rural, and immigrant communities.

10. Educate policy and decision-makers regarding gender, race, and colonization. The effects of colonization, structural racism, and patriarchy have resulted in disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 across communities, with historically marginalized communities suffering far worse health, economic, and educational outcomes. Without addressing these root causes, even the most progressive policies are often hollowed out, left unimplemented, or directly undermined. Anti-oppression training on these topics would bring an equity framework to decision-makers and policy makers and help them better advocate regarding issues impacting communities.



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This report is dedicated to all of the essential workers, for their courage.

About NewMexicoWomen.Org

NewMexicoWomen.Org (NMW.O) is the only fund of its kind in New Mexico that works to advance opportunities for self-identifying women and girls statewide so they can lead self-sufficient, healthy, and empowered lives.

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