

# Northern New Mexico Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table

Investment Strategy Study Phase II -  
Stakeholder Engagement Data Report,  
Recommendations,  
and Action Plan



THE CRICKET ISLAND FOUNDATION



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# Stakeholder Engagement Data Report, Recommendations, and Action Plan

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Provided by:



**Student Success Happens One Meaningful Conversation at a Time**

# Background

## The Strategy Table

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The New Mexico Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table (Strategy Table) was established in 2021 with a goal to expand and improve access to college, career, and community pathway opportunities for youth of color, opportunity youth, young parents, and other underrepresented youth middle-school-age through age 29 in Northern New Mexico. The Strategy Table serves San Miguel County, Mora County, Taos County, Rio Arriba County, Santa Fe County, Los Alamos County, Sandoval County, and the 18 Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes located in those counties.

The Strategy Table is composed of representatives from the following fourteen national, regional, and local funders:

- Anchorum Health Foundation;
- Annie E. Casey Foundation;
- Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions
- Conrad Hilton Foundation.
- Cricket Island Foundation;
- Daniels Fund;
- Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Community Partnership Office;
- LANL Foundation;
- Marshall L. and Perrine D. McCune Charitable Foundation;
- Santa Fe Community Foundation;
- Thornburg Foundation;
- United Way of North Central New Mexico.

To improve the outcomes of the youth of Northern New Mexico, the Strategy Table originally identified and created definitions for [eight intervention areas](#):

- Work-Based Learning
- College preparation support
- College completion support
- High School/GED completion support
- Career pathways and career technical education (CTE)
- Youth development and leadership
- Entrepreneurial training
- Access to financial tools

## Vision for a Coordinated Investment Strategy

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The Strategy Table partners seek to better coordinate, align, and leverage regional grantmaking and investments in and across the eight interventions. To this end, the Strategy Table is engaging in the following tactics:

- Mapping and analyzing philanthropic and public investments and other funding in Northern New Mexico focused on the eight interventions;
- Developing coordinated investment strategies and measures for the Strategy Table members to enhance investments and impact;
- Developing a framework to improve collaboration among the Strategy Table members;
- Engaging in shared learning; and
- Engaging youth middle school age through age 29, service providers, and employers.

In 2022, the Strategy Table developed a long-term strategic initiative designed to create meaningful action steps to make progress in achieving its goal. The initiative is designed to be implemented in three phases:

- Phase I (Completed July 2023): Analyze private and public funding trends in Northern NM aligned to the defined age groups and target populations for investments.
- Phase II (Current phase): Complement the fiscal mapping results with authentic input from the defined key stakeholder groups (refer to the list of stakeholders outlined below). Develop the following funding practices based on the results of engagement sessions:
  - Coordinated investment strategies and measures for the Strategy Table members to enhance investments and impact;
  - Mechanisms for Strategy Table members to have more meaningful partnerships with governmental entities and better leverage federal, Tribal, state and local funding; and
  - A framework to improve collaboration among the Strategy Table members and with stakeholders and partners. This work is scheduled to be completed during the summer of 2024.
- Phase III (Summer 2024): Develop and implement a coordinated investment strategy that incorporates the findings from Phases I and II.

# Research and Engagement Design

The communities and stakeholders that directly benefit from the Strategy Table’s investments are uniquely situated to provide insight on the impact of those investments. Understanding the assets and challenges of communities across Northern New Mexico can ensure that funding is responsive to their unique needs and circumstances. To help the Strategy Table evaluate its investment approach, the following stakeholders were engaged:

- Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes in the counties served by the Strategy Table;
- Youth and young adults reflecting the Strategy Table’s priority populations;
- Non Profit organizations that focus on the Strategy Table’s priority populations;
- Public 7-12 and post-secondary schools, including Bureau of Indian Education-funded and charter schools; and
- Non-Tribal governments, including federal, state, county and local.

Stakeholders provided direct qualitative feedback via eight stakeholder engagement sessions and through a pair of surveys designed to collect a greater level of depth on each of the interventions individually.

## Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

To better understand how the Strategy Table has served communities in northern New Mexico, eight stakeholder engagement sessions were held to collect input from the communities directly. Five engagement sessions garnered feedback from individuals in the counties impacted by the Strategy Table’s investments, and additional engagement sessions were held to gather specific feedback from public funders, youth and young adults, and the Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes in Northern New Mexico.

1. Santa Ana Pueblo - Tribal Engagement (14 of 18 Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes in the region represented)
2. Tierra Amarilla - Northern Rio Arriba County
3. Las Vegas - San Miguel County
4. Taos - Taos County
5. Española - Southern Rio Arriba County, Santa Fe County, Los Alamos County
6. Bernalillo - Sandoval County
7. Public Funders Focus Group (Virtual)
8. Young Adult Focus Groups (Tierra Amarilla, Las Vegas, Taos, Cuba)

The stakeholder engagement sessions were designed to foster an inclusive dialogue, bringing together voices from individuals directly impacted by the Strategy Table’s investments.

Participants included Tribal stakeholders, educators, nonprofit organizations, youth and young adults, government agencies, higher education stakeholders, and other community members from northern New Mexico.

Table 1 summarizes the representation of various stakeholder groups across all five engagement sessions.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement Participants**

Stakeholder Group	Participants
K-12 / Post Secondary Educators	29
Tribal Stakeholders	23
Nonprofit Organizations	16
Youth and Young Adults	20
Government Agencies	24
<b>TOTAL STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>112</b>

Participants in the stakeholder engagement sessions were given a packet of information providing a background on the Strategy Table, information about the eight interventions, and a set of three guiding questions:

1. **Strategy:** How would you improve the approach being taken by the Strategy Table members so it better serves Northern New Mexico?
2. **Funding:** How can we make it easier for Northern New Mexico to get foundation, federal, and state grants to help your youth and young adults succeed?
3. **Collaboration:** How can we work together better to support youth and young adults in accessing careers and college?

While these guiding questions were provided to frame the stakeholder engagement sessions, facilitators allowed discussions to expand to topics of greatest interest to participants. Facilitators also shared key data from the fiscal mapping report. Throughout the sessions, participants shared their views on critical themes. The discussions were instrumental in identifying community-specific challenges and assets, which are essential for tailoring effective and sustainable interventions.

## Surveys

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In addition to broad stakeholder discussions, researchers distributed a pair of surveys to stakeholders designed to collect more specific, detailed thoughts and opinions from stakeholders in Northern New Mexico. The first survey was designed to capture stakeholders' feedback on the definitions of the eight interventions, opinions on whether those definitions were aligned to meet the Strategy Table's goal, and perceptions of the importance of each intervention. The second survey was also narrowly tailored to collect feedback directly from beneficiaries of Strategy Table funds, attempting to capture feedback on funding models, alignment of goals, specific community gaps, and how to build capacity of organizations engaged in the interventions.

The pre-survey received a total of 77 responses, and the post survey received 26 responses. The vast majority of responses were from the target audience of funded organizations while 13 respondents identified as youth and young adults, and 14 respondents identified as a representative from a government agency. These surveys provided an opportunity to give specific feedback on each of the interventions and allowed participants time to write deeper, more nuanced feedback than may have been allowed during the stakeholder engagement sessions.

## Previous Research

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This report builds upon three sources of previous research in an attempt to align and summarize all of the Strategy Table's current coordination efforts. The following other sources serve as critical references throughout this report; many of the findings of stakeholders in Northern New Mexico align with the findings of the Phase I Funding Report, the Federal Funds Survey Report, and the Tribal Stakeholder Engagement Report.

**Investing in College and Career Pathways Report.** In July 2023, the Children’s Funding Project (CFP) completed Phase I of the Strategy Table’s study of its investment approach, publishing a report called “*Investing in College and Career Pathways for Youth in Northern New Mexico.*” CFP collected and analyzed data related to three focus areas:

- **Key outcome statistics related to the Strategy Table’s goal and the eight interventions (e.g. high school graduation rates, number and percentage of opportunity youth).** CFP used student outcome data to demonstrate the opportunities and challenges youth face in Northern New Mexico, especially youth living in rural and Tribal communities.
- **The amount of grants and investments made by each foundation participating in the Strategy Table’s project at the time and a small number of other funders.** The purpose of this analysis was to identify key themes, points of duplication, gaps, leveraging opportunities, scaling opportunities, shared grantees and other insights relevant to achieving the Strategy Table’s goal. The fiscal map results also included a comparison of the primary funding strategies, tactics, and key initiatives or projects of each Strategy Table member as well as each member’s geographic focus and funding restrictions.
- **Data on public investments (federal, Tribal, state, and local).** The data were categorized using the same criteria as those applied to the Strategy Table members’ grants and investments. The results were used to compare Strategy Table members’ and public investment trends to identify key themes, duplication, gaps, leveraging opportunities, scaling opportunities, shared funding recipients, and other insights relevant to achieving the Strategy Table’s goal.

Based on this mapping and analysis, the CFP provided recommendations to the Strategy Table to create opportunities to better coordinate, align and leverage regional grantmaking and investments in and across these eight intervention areas, including opportunities to develop coordinated grantmaking strategies. Since July 2023, the Strategy Table has been engaging in shared learning to understand the *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, and seeks to corroborate quantitative data in the report with qualitative insights from communities across Northern New Mexico.

**Federal Funds Survey Report.** In March 2024, the Grant Plant Inc. presented findings from a survey of philanthropic funders in New Mexico, including many members of the Strategy Table. The survey included questions about funders’ familiarity with federal and state funding sources, challenges grant seekers face, and best practices for matching funds, capacity building, and a statewide federal grants office. The federal funds survey coalesced in a set of short-term priorities for funders, including identifying high-leverage grant opportunities, gathering information on intermediaries and smaller organizations, and engaging state agencies, national funders, and key intermediaries about shared interests. While not specific to the Strategy Table’s investments, the strategies identified in the Grant Plant survey findings are similar to the qualitative data collected in the development of this report.

**Tribal Stakeholders Convening.** Engagement with Tribes, Nations and Pueblos revealed unique challenges and opportunities related to the Strategy Table’s investments. Tribal stakeholders stressed the importance of place-based, flexible funding models that respect Tribal sovereignty and cultural contexts, highlighted the need for capacity building, both in terms of human resources and community infrastructure, and emphasized the importance of supporting holistic development for Tribal youth, including cultural identity and traditional practices. Additionally, Tribal stakeholders called for a shift in funders’ mindsets from grant-making to making reparations, acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization. Addressing these specific needs and perspectives can enhance the effectiveness and cultural responsiveness of the Strategy Table’s investments in Tribal communities.

# Survey, Community Conversation, and Focus Group Findings

The Strategy Table’s goal is to expand and improve access to college, career, and community pathway opportunities for youth of color, opportunity youth, young parents, and other underrepresented youth from middle school age through age 29 in Northern New Mexico. To meet this goal, the Strategy Table invests in organizations that engage in the eight intervention areas listed above.

Qualitative comments collected during engagement sessions and surveys of stakeholders directly impacted by the Strategy Table’s work offered valuable insights on how the eight interventions may be better coordinated, helping the Strategy Table develop a streamlined investment strategy to enhance its impact.

This section of the report provides a detailed account of the persistent themes, challenges, and unique assets and opportunities collected from community stakeholder engagement sessions and surveys. This section also summarizes the voices of underrepresented youth and young adults as they relate to the eight interventions and compares the results of the engagement sessions held for this project to a tribal stakeholder engagement session held in November 2023.

## Definitions and Stakeholder Priorities

**The definitions adopted by the Strategy Table are well-aligned to the Strategy Table’s goal.** During the survey, stakeholders were asked to rate the definition of each of the eight interventions, especially as they relate to accomplishing the Strategy Table’s goal. According to survey respondents, the definitions of the eight interventions are generally seen as well-aligned to the Strategy Table’s goal. As shown in Table 2, on a scale of five possible points, every definition received an average rating greater than 4. The highest-rated definitions were those for youth development and leadership, with a rating of 4.66, and work-based learning, with a rating of 4.58.

Even though stakeholders assigned high ratings for all of the Strategy Table’s interventions, many stakeholders provided suggestions to help the Strategy Table refine its definitions. Detailed feedback on each of the Strategy Table’s interventions can be found in [Appendix A](#).

**Youth development and leadership, work-based learning, and career pathways and career technical education are priorities among stakeholders.** When asked to rate the “value” of each of the eight interventions in achieving the Strategy Table’s goal, survey respondents rated work-based learning, career pathways and CTE, and youth development and leadership as the highest value interventions. When asked to select the first, second, and third most important interventions, work-based learning and youth development and leadership tied among the highest priorities, with career pathways and CTE placing third. Table 3 describes survey respondents’ ratings of interventions as the first, second, and third most important interventions. The table assigns a weighted priority score given the number of first place, second place, and third place ratings.

**Table 2 (Q): I agree that this definition of <Intervention> will contribute to the Strategy Table’s goal (5-point scale).**

Intervention	Definition Rating
Youth Development and Leadership	4.66
Work-Based Learning	4.58
College Preparation Support	4.49
Career Pathways and CTE	4.46
College Completion Supports/Scholarships	4.46
High School/GED Completion Supports	4.42
Access to Financial Tools	4.42
Entrepreneurial Training	4.37



**Table 3: Priorities of Survey Respondents**  
(NNMP20 Pre-Survey for Stakeholders)

Priority	Intervention	Importance of Intervention			Weighted Priority Score
		Rated First	Rated Second	Rated Third	
1 (Tie)	Youth Development and Leadership	20	7	11	85
1 (Tie)	Work-Based Learning	15	17	6	85
3	Career Pathways and CTE	9	13	14	67
4	College Preparation Support	6	9	6	42
5	High School / GED Completion Supports	3	8	4	29
6	College Completion Supports / Scholarships	4	2	5	21
7	Access to Financial Tools	2	2	7	17
8	Entrepreneurial Training	0	1	6	8

In recent years, the Strategy Table’s investments have become more aligned with stakeholders’ priorities. The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report describes the dollar amount of grants and investments made by each foundation participating in the Strategy Table. Based on data collected by CFP, between 2017 and 2021, the Strategy Table focused heavily on college completion supports, youth development and leadership, and high school and GED completion supports. While youth development and leadership is generally well-received by stakeholders, high school and college completion supports tend to be low on stakeholders’ priority lists. As shown in Table 4, however, the Strategy Table’s investments grew more closely aligned with the priority rankings identified by stakeholders in 2022. With some exceptions, the amount of funding allocated to the interventions in 2022 more or less aligns with stakeholders ratings of each of the interventions. For example, youth development and leadership and work based learning rank high among stakeholders priorities and are also the interventions which received the greatest level of funding from the Strategy Table in 2022.

**Table 4: Stakeholder Priorities, Actual Investments, and Investment Scenario**  
(NNMP20 Pre-Survey for Stakeholders, Investing in College and Career Pathways Report)

Intervention	Weighted Priority Score	Amount Funded in 2017-2021	2021-2017 Funding Rank	Amount Funded in 2022	2022 Funding Rank	Scenario:
						Weighted Funding
Youth Development and Leadership	85	\$6,490,077	2	\$3,054,025	1	\$2,535,099
Work-Based Learning	85	\$2,137,484	5	\$2,191,650	2	\$2,535,099
Career Pathways and CTE	67	\$2,183,964	4	\$1,493,690	4	\$1,998,255
College Preparation Support	42	\$1,672,000	6	\$400,000	6	\$1,252,637
High School / GED Completion Supports	29	\$2,268,925	3	\$1,715,531	3	\$864,916
College Completion Supports / Scholarships	21	\$9,246,955	1	\$1,245,347	5	\$626,319
Access to Financial Tools	17	\$271,862	8	\$219,000	8	\$507,020
Entrepreneurial Training	8	\$1,587,500	7	\$238,700	7	\$238,598
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$26,958,766</b>		<b>\$10,557,943</b>		<b>\$10,557,943</b>

**Reallocating additional funding could better align the Strategy Table’s investments with stakeholder priorities.** While the funding allocated to each intervention has become more closely aligned to stakeholder priorities, the amount of funding for each intervention is generally not proportional to the level of priority assigned to the intervention by stakeholders, as estimated by weighted priority rankings. To illustrate this, Table 4 demonstrates a scenario under which the Strategy Table allocates its investments in a manner directly proportional to the rankings assigned by stakeholders. This scenario results in a net decrease to investments in youth development and leadership, high school/GED completion supports, and college completion supports, and repurposes those funds to increase investments in work-based learning, career pathways and CTE, and college preparation supports.

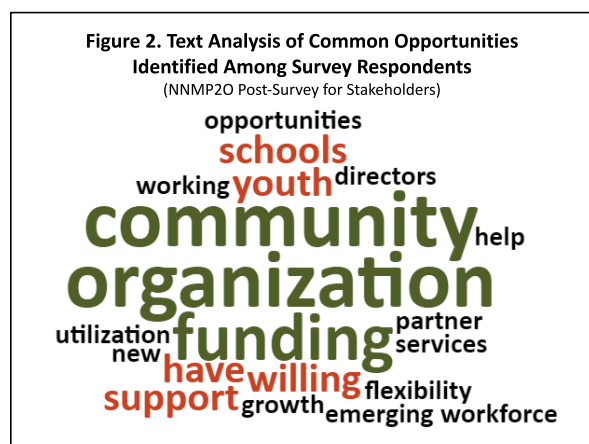
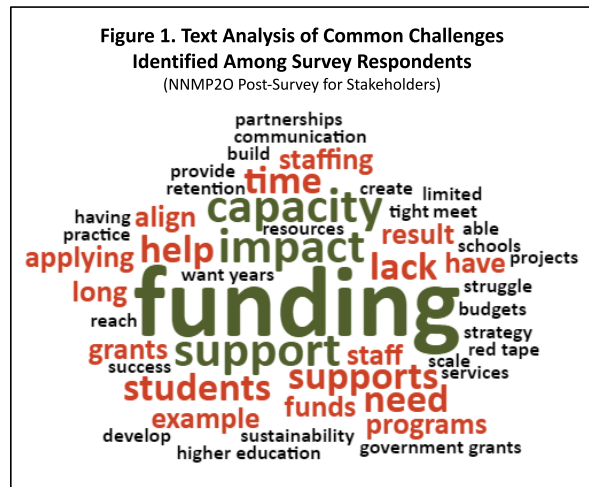
**Despite high ratings for the definitions of interventions, stakeholders perceived relatively lower levels of “value” from the interventions.** The survey asked stakeholders to rate the value of each of the eight interventions. Based on stakeholders’ ratings, none of the interventions received an average value rating greater than 4 of 5 possible points. As was the case with definition ratings, stakeholders found the greatest perceived values for work-based learning (3.98), career pathways and CTE (3.92), and youth development and leadership programs (3.90). While stakeholders agree that each of the eight interventions are high priorities, higher levels of perceived value are still possible. Higher perceived value may be achieved through a number of mechanisms, including investing additional resources as suggested in the scenario in Table 4, improving grantees capacity to implement programs, or even through evaluating programs and publishing data reports to create a broader awareness of successful initiatives.

## Challenges, Opportunities, and Barriers

Twenty-six engagement session participants that receive funding from the Strategy Table provided responses to a follow-up survey asking specific questions about perceived challenges, opportunities, and barriers related to their organizations. The follow-up survey was designed to be administered to funded organizations only, offering deeper insight into the work of the organizations implementing the eight interventions.

**Challenges.** Stakeholders identified several challenges particularly relating to the keywords "funding," "impact," "support," and "capacity." According to stakeholders, **funding** is a primary challenge, with difficulties in securing consistent and sufficient financial resources to sustain programs, manage operational costs, and support long-term planning. **Support** challenges include inadequate staffing to handle responsibilities, lack of parental and community involvement, and insufficient backing from governance councils and donors. **Capacity** issues stem from small operating budgets, minimal staff, and the inability to effectively navigate rigorous application processes and reporting requirements. Due to these challenges, organizations often feel their **impact** is limited.

**Opportunities.** While **funding** was one of the primary challenges identified by stakeholders, it is also found among the greatest perceived opportunities, with grantees most excited about the generosity of the philanthropic community



and leveraging opportunities for sustained, flexible investments. Stakeholders identified several other opportunities, placing particular emphasis on the importance of organizations and communities. **Organizations** are discussed as opportunities, particularly as they participate in strategic planning, professional development, and strong leadership. **Communities** play a role in the work of organizations as well, with many stakeholders writing on the importance of forming partnerships with local entities, schools, and employers and creating tailored training programs to enhance service delivery. Other commonly mentioned opportunities included schools, youth, and an emerging workforce in Northern New Mexico.



**Barriers.** Finally, stakeholders identified several barriers related to securing grants, accessing public resources, finding grant writers, and meeting reporting requirements. Challenges with **federal grants** include a lack of necessary business infrastructure and the absence of in-house or contracted evaluators, making it difficult to meet eligibility criteria. There are perceived barriers to **public resources**, including bureaucratic red tape, stringent procurement laws, and the anti-donation clause<sup>1</sup>. The scarcity of **grant writers** is an obstacle for many organizations, which lack the staff needed to research, apply for, and manage grants effectively. In addition, **reporting requirements** are noted for their complexity and time consumption, diverting valuable resources from direct service activities and creating additional strain on already limited organizational capacity.

## Opportunities to Refine the Strategy Table’s Investment Strategy

Based on feedback received during the regional engagement sessions, 12 persistent themes emerged as commonalities across Northern New Mexico stakeholders. The persistent themes are generally related to the three guiding questions on strategy, funding, and collaboration, arranged graphically in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Improving the Strategy Table Member's Primary Funding Strategies and Tactics**  
(Regional Stakeholder Engagement Sessions)

Strategy	Funding	Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote holistic young adult development</li> <li>Develop community-specific strategies</li> <li>Support inclusive and diverse opportunities</li> <li>Set goals and measure outcomes and impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamline funding and administrative processes</li> <li>Sustain and increase investments over the long-term</li> <li>Allow flexibility for adaptations</li> <li>Include technical and operational support to nonprofits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide structured opportunities for networking and partnerships</li> <li>Improve communication and clearly define roles</li> <li>Build bridges to youth, families, and communities</li> <li>Strategically design grants to incentivize collaborative practices</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The [anti-donation clause](#) is a provision in the New Mexico State Constitution that states no government agency shall “directly or indirectly lend or pledge its credit or make any donation to or in aid of any person, association or public or private corporation.” The clause has generally been construed to mean that the state cannot make direct appropriations to any private party, including nonprofit organizations. To receive public funds, organizations can contract with state agencies to provide services, though this process tends to be time consuming and labor intensive.

The persistent themes identified among the stakeholder engagement sessions serve as a critical throughline across each engagement session and carry important implications for refining and coordinating the Strategy Table’s goals and investment approach. The following sections include a discussion of particular strategies and suggestions related to each of the 12 persistent themes. These strategies are compiled using direct quotes and feedback from Northern New Mexico communities and key stakeholders. In addition to the in-depth discussion of themes in this section, [Appendix B](#) contains a crosswalk of the community engagement sessions during which these themes emerged.

## Strategy: How would you improve the approach being taken by the Strategy Table members so it better serves Northern New Mexico?

<b>Promote Holistic Young Adult Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Start early in children’s educational journeys, and consider holistic approaches that promote students’ social, emotional, and developmental needs, spanning from early childhood through college and careers.</li> <li>● Help students navigate critical transitions between educational stages (elementary to middle, middle to high, and high school to college or careers). Foundational social and emotional skills can serve as a basis for helping students navigate their own transitions.</li> <li>● Integrate mental health supports within school environments, ensuring that educational programs are trauma-informed. Consider prioritizing specific mental health interventions, like programs to evaluate digital well-being and educate youth on the impact of screens, phones, and social media.</li> <li>● Consider support for fundamental, applicable life skills, like opening a bank account, paying taxes, understanding interest, public speaking, and other adult responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Develop Community-Specific Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adapt programs to meet the unique cultural, economic, and demographic needs of specific communities.</li> <li>● Recognize the distinct needs of urban and rural school districts, especially as they apply to the grant application process. For example, leverage opportunities to co-write grants with intermediaries who deeply understand communities.</li> <li>● Leverage and expand upon existing community partnerships and other community assets.</li> <li>● Leverage community insights and parental involvement to rebrand and refocus educational and support programs, ensuring they meet the localized needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Support Inclusive and Diverse Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure programs are accessible to students with disabilities, non-traditional learners, and low-income students—without excluding traditional learners.</li> <li>● Offer multiple pathways for education and career success, including vocational training, apprenticeships, hands-on learning, and college preparatory experiences.</li> <li>● Foster cultural awareness embedded throughout youth leadership training programs, recognizing the importance of cultural contexts in leadership development.</li> </ul>
<b>Set Goals and Measure Outcomes and Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a set of clearly-defined goals accompanied with support to track measurable, yet accessible, metrics. Focus on progress and implementation metrics.</li> <li>● Develop adaptive assessments and feedback mechanisms for flexible implementation, focusing on continuous improvement rather than pass/fail outcomes.</li> <li>● Take care not to overburden implementers with data collection requirements and provide templates and tool-kits for assessment, reporting, and evaluation of outcomes.</li> <li>● Utilize regional intermediary support and external evaluators to enhance evaluation.</li> <li>● Consider co-creating rubrics in consultation with programs and communities, creating shared ownership of outcomes.</li> </ul>

## Funding: How can we make it easier for Northern New Mexico to get foundation, federal and state grants to help your youth and young adults succeed?

<b>Streamline Funding and Administrative Processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create simple, transparent, streamlined funding processes to reduce bureaucracy and paperwork - align the amount of the grant with the amount of energy needed to apply.</li> <li>● Consider a unified application or centralized portal for grants to increase access and participation.</li> <li>● Consider the use of coordinated packages from multiple funders to provide more substantial monetary support.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustain Investments over the Long-Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lengthen funding cycles to provide stability and enable long-term planning.</li> <li>● Design multi-year grants with mid-cycle evaluations.</li> <li>● Create options for automatic grant renewal based on predetermined performance and impact, encouraging sustained success and reducing application burdens.</li> </ul>
<b>Allow Flexibility for Adaptations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide sufficient flexibility to allow programs to adapt to evolving educational landscapes and stakeholder needs.</li> <li>● Establish fewer restrictions on funding to enable quick adjustments in strategy and implementation.</li> <li>● Allow stakeholders to set priorities that match their local communities' educational goals and visions; ensure additional requirements are in alignment with community contexts.</li> </ul>
<b>Include Technical And Operational Support to Nonprofits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most nonprofits have a small staff and shoestring budgets. Organizations need additional support to expand their capabilities to manage and sustain initiatives and to allow them to focus on what they do best - program development and implementation.</li> <li>● Consider a regional support structure to streamline operational responsibilities like human resources, contact management, data collection, analysis, and evaluation.</li> <li>● Provide regional grant resource support centers or support through intermediaries. Ensure support is differentiated based on individual community needs, and ensure regional intermediaries are deeply aware of community needs, familiar with potential grantees, and capable of recommending high impact grants based on local contexts.</li> </ul>

## Collaboration: How can we work together better to support youth and young adults in accessing careers and college?

<b>Provide Structured Opportunities for Networking and Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider regularly scheduled community engagements to share best practices learned from funded projects, coordinate ongoing efforts, share resources, and build partnerships.</li> <li>● Build funding opportunities in direct collaboration with stakeholders rather than having stakeholders respond to pre-determined requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Communication and Clearly Define Roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish clear and open lines of communication to allow grantees to share information, updates, and resources to the broader community.</li> <li>● Clearly communicate goals, roles, and expectations of all partners.</li> <li>● Make decisions in a transparent manner to build trust.</li> </ul>
<b>Build Bridges to Youth, Families, and Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incorporate direct input from youth in strategic planning and grant review processes.</li> <li>● Actively engage parents and families in funded interventions. Provide families with the necessary tools and information to support their children's educational journeys. Recognize the role families play in helping students navigate critical transitions.</li> <li>● Build a deep understanding of existing community assets, organizations, and infrastructure, and utilize those assets to enhance value.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategically Design Grants to Incentivize Collaborative Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Design grants to incentivize collaboration between relevant stakeholders, potentially including families, state agencies, or community partners.</li> <li>● Provide state, federal, and philanthropic matching grants with broad uses for a set of mutually defined outcomes but broad uses for implementation.</li> </ul>

## Challenges and Opportunities Related to the Goal and Eight Interventions

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Stakeholder engagement sessions across northern New Mexico revealed a set of diverse challenges, assets, and opportunities across the counties the Strategy Table serves. Members of each community, including youth and young adults, educators, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies, provided valuable insights into the unique contexts of their regions during six regional stakeholder engagement sessions, and underscored the need for grants designed to meet specific local needs. The voices of Northern New Mexico communities contain key insights to help the Strategy Table refine its investment strategies to better support the development and well-being of youth and young adults. In addition to this brief summary, a complete list and discussion of the unique challenges, assets, and opportunities that emerged during each stakeholder engagement session can be found in [Appendix C](#).

Many of the challenges faced in northern New Mexico are related to the limited capacity of local educators and organizations, difficulty navigating complex grant processes, and duplicative, siloed efforts. Northern Rio Arriba County faces significant funding constraints and issues with parental and community engagement, which limits the sustainability of educational programs and community support for education initiatives. In San Miguel County, difficulties in staffing, resource management, and burdensome data collection hinder program effectiveness. Taos County struggles with the complexity of grant processes and bureaucratic challenges, leading to competition and redundancy among organizations. In Southern Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Los Alamos Counties, stakeholders spoke about bureaucratic red tape and siloed operations, which impede collaboration and efficient resource use. Finally, in Sandoval County, participants perceived a lack of investment in entrepreneurial development, challenges in preparing students for college, a sense of strain on nonprofits operating in the area, and a need for real-world financial education.

Despite these challenges, each region also showcases unique assets and opportunities. Northern Rio Arriba County benefits from its current college and career pathways, innovative skill development programs, and sustainable community partnerships that enhance practical learning opportunities. In San Miguel and Mora Counties, effective youth development programs and work-based learning initiatives provide real-world skills and leadership development. Taos leverages existing community structures, youth leadership initiatives, and entrepreneurial training programs to foster community engagement and skill development. Southern Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Los Alamos Counties believe they can capitalize on their strong community and cultural strengths, existing initiatives, and philanthropic funding to support educational programs. Sandoval County has promising initiatives in financial literacy and career exploration, supported by strong community and parental engagement, and substantial nonprofit support, presenting opportunities for enhanced collaboration and program integration.

## Underrepresented Youth and Young Adult Voices

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Perhaps the most compelling feedback on the interventions themselves came from the primary beneficiaries of the Strategy Table's investments: underrepresented youth and young adults. The following themes were compiled based on direct input from youth and young adults during focus groups held in Tierra Amarilla, Taos, Las Vegas, and Santa Fe. Specific feedback related to each of the Strategy Table's interventions, including supporting quotes directly from youth, can be found in [Appendix A](#).

- **We need help with the transition to adulthood.** Youth and young adults are seeking guidance on transitional life phases, such as moving from high school to college or entering the workforce. They expressed a need for more supportive structures in education to address these transitions, including practical job skills training and real-world financial management.

- **Leadership development programs are effective and can be embedded in other opportunities.** Youth and young adults value their own leadership skills and the programs they participate in to develop those skills. Youth and young adults explained leadership development opportunities are typically self-selected activities like sports or academic clubs. To reach a broader group of youth, youth and young adults suggested that leadership skills should be embedded in the classroom or cultivated through more inclusive activities that reflect a wider range of interests and capabilities. As one young adult noted, “every student should have an opportunity to try to be a leader - that’s the only way they’ll know if they’re a good leader.”
- **Engagement is low, partially due to teaching styles.** Youth participants said that teachers need to make classrooms more interactive and engaging for students. They feel that teachers are currently relying too heavily on lecturing and reading PowerPoint slides. The youth suggested that teachers incorporate multiple teaching methods to connect with students’ varied lived realities. Additionally, students felt that teachers may have gained an over-reliance on technology and virtual instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic. Youth prefer less computer use and want teachers to move away from virtual modes of teaching.
- **Social and emotional learning goes both ways.** Just as students develop social and emotional skills, teachers should be cognizant of their own social and emotional learning. Youth and young adults explained they believe teachers in their schools have a lot of progress to make in building their own social and emotional skills. The youth noted teachers should develop a level of trust and respect for students, rather than treating them like they have nothing to contribute.
- **Current financial literacy courses don’t focus on simple, practical skills.** Youth and young adults wished they had access to financial education focused on real-world application, like managing debts, understanding banking options, and making informed spending decisions. Current financial education opportunities are either too theoretical or disconnected from students’ daily realities, which often leads to a lack of engagement and information retention. The timing of financial literacy courses also plays a role, with some youth and young adults explaining they took financial literacy at too young of an age to understand the real value of money, making it difficult to connect with the concepts.
- **College-readiness should extend beyond academics.** Youth and young adults believe current college preparation efforts focus too heavily on academics, rather than the practical and life skills needed to succeed in college. Youth and young adults frequently mentioned the lack of accessible information about scholarships, a lack of understanding of financial implications of education, a need for better support for navigating college entry processes, and more relevant advice from counselors and educators. They suggested that more proactive and inclusive information dissemination could help bridge the knowledge gap.
- **Traditional education does not cover business concepts.** Youth and young adults explained they received little to no formal education about business concepts or entrepreneurship in their schools. However, there are opportunities to learn how to run a business in informal learning environments provided by family-owned businesses, school-based shops, and community entrepreneurs. Young people are enthusiastic about more structured and formal educational opportunities that would provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to consider business ownership as a viable career path.
- **Families and communities have a strong influence on us.** Among youth and young adults, there is a shared feeling that families and communities influence decision-making and value systems. This includes both positive impacts, such as support and encouragement, and negative impacts, such as a lack of exposure to wider opportunities or pressures to conform to family expectations.

# Improving How Strategy Table Members Work with and Fund Tribes, Nations and Pueblos and their Entities

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A portion of the Strategy Table's evaluation of its investment strategies involved the engagement of tribal communities. A tribal engagement session held in November 2023 resulted in a report detailing themes that emerged during the discussion of the Strategy Table's investments. While the full report gives an in-depth breakdown of each theme from the tribal engagement session, many findings resound with the persistent themes identified in the five regional stakeholder engagement sessions. Other findings bear mentioning as considerations of how the Strategy Table's investments specifically impact New Mexico Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos.

## Findings Related to Persistent Themes

**Develop place-based, flexible funding models.** Participants in the tribal engagement session requested that funders build a deeper understanding of the individual, unique communities in which they are investing. Tribal communities requested a relaxation of current restrictions and a collaborative process by which Tribal governments and funded entities could determine their own priorities. This process should include:

- Easier, simplified applications;
- Longer grant cycles;
- Developing a common application;
- Larger grant amounts;
- Funding sustainability of programs;
- Providing a pool of flexible funds.

**Building human resources capacity.** Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos need to hire personnel with specific job descriptions and roles for funding management and to provide training for these employees. Currently, much of this work falls on program employees who are hired to be providing direct services. Some entities noted they had to return funds because programs did not have the human resources to fulfill funding obligations. Participants described a need for in-house training sessions on grant management, as well as a pool of applicants for direct program service delivery. Funders should consider providing funding to hire temporary employees for the life cycles of grants so programs can be implemented with higher quality.

**Building community capacity.** Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos could benefit from support with developing strategic plans, data collection structures and processes, internal systems to manage grants, and evaluation plans that address college and career pathway development in their communities. Tribal governments could be better supported in embedding the eight interventions, including college and career pathway development and leadership training, into their strategic plans. In addition, communities within Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos sometimes need assistance understanding how their governments operate, their rights and responsibilities, and the services and programs to which they have access. State government officials can also benefit from knowing about the programs and services offered by Tribal entities.

**Invest in practices to support holistic development of Tribal Youth and young adults, including belonging, meaning, well-being, and purpose.** Participants believed philanthropic investments should enhance youth and young adults' connections to their home communities, fostering a sense of belonging, which impacts mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioral outcomes. Key to this is a belief that funding should support career pathways for Native youth to fill key positions within their Tribal nations. This also means supporting higher compensation for jobs on Tribal land, encouraging youth to return home and be economically independent. For Native Americans, holistic well-being involves the resources needed to navigate life confidently, as well as participation in cultural and traditional practices. Concrete suggestions included programs that help explore the



meaning of success from the perspectives of Native youth, emphasizing positive self-definitions and culturally relevant roles and careers. Traditional education initiatives should be funded equitably compared with other public education, ensuring support without commodifying traditional knowledge. This discussion also involved the following themes:

- Support life transitions;
- Support conditions needed for Native youth to thrive;
- Support workforce development in tribal communities;
- Support outside scholarships for success in higher education.

## Findings Specific to Indigenous Communities

**Rethinking cultural responsiveness and “youth of color.”** Tribal stakeholders expressed concerns about the terminology used in the Strategy Table goal and interventions, particularly the words “culturally responsive” and “youth of color.” True cultural responsiveness involves the application of cultural competence, or a genuine interaction and understanding between organizations from different cultural backgrounds. Participants in the tribal session suggested funders develop a curiosity for other peoples’ experiences, build a deeper understanding of the communities their investments serve, and question their implicit biases to cultivate self-awareness.

**Shift mindsets from “making grants” to “making reparations.”** Participants pointed out that the endowments of many philanthropic organizations are derived from revenue generated from lands and resources stolen from indigenous peoples. Tribes’ reliance on external funding and resources stems from the taking of those lands and resources as well as the intentional disruption of traditional Native economies by federal and state policy and the actions of non-Native settlers. For this reason, Tribal stakeholders at this session were adamant that funders must shift a fundamental belief: funders should see grantmaking in Tribal nations as a way for funders to begin repairing the damage caused by colonization by providing funding to support Tribal self-determined programs.

**Increase capability to develop grant proposals while dismantling linguistic imperialism.** Several participants communicated the importance of learning about grant applications and the highly specialized, technical writing skills necessary for grant funding while, at the same time, questioning why such “code switching” is necessary to overcome barriers to accessing funding. Participants noted “linguistic imperialism,” or the process of imposing a dominant cultural language, is prevalent in the realm of philanthropic funding. Funders should be conscious and intentional in their forms and practices to ensure that the expectation to use perfect technical English does not become an undue barrier for Indigenous people and organizations seeking to access funding.

**Transform narratives and work to enhance sovereignty.** Tribal engagement session participants mentioned that they are often asked to take a deficit-based approach in telling the stories of successes and needs of their programs in order to access philanthropic funding. Rather than seeking positive indicators, current grant applications often risk perpetuating negative stereotypes. For example, one participant explained “you get more money the worse you look.” Funders are in a unique position to advocate for Tribal stakeholders and the promotion of new narratives and procedures in grant funding, including the following:

- Fund Tribal research initiatives;
- Fund pilot programs;
- Respect information and data sovereignty;
- Revise performance measures.

# Existing and Potential Models for More Meaningful Partnerships with Government Entities to Better Leverage Federal, Tribal, State and Local Funding

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During a focus group with Strategy Table members and diverse representatives from government agencies and public funders, participants discussed the benefits and challenges associated with four potential funding models/mechanisms. The funding models were proposed to improve collaboration and coordination between the Strategy Table and government entities, though each model has limitations to its effectiveness.

## Clearinghouse Model

One option discussed was a centralized repository or mechanism where organizations would be able access information about available funding opportunities from various sources, including federal, state, private, and tribal funders. Public funders discussed the fact that multiple application processes can be overwhelming, placing a large administrative burden on organizations, especially smaller ones. By creating a “one-stop shop” for funding information, a clearinghouse model could streamline the application process, making it easier for organizations to identify and apply for relevant grants.

**Analysis.** Establishing a clearinghouse of both public and private grants would simplify access to funding and enhance the efficiency of grant management by reducing redundancy and improving coordination among funders. This model is not exclusive of the other three models discussed; the Strategy Table could create a clearinghouse while simultaneously working to align its funds with other grants, providing matching funds, or pooling funds with government entities.

## Aligned Funding Model

Public funders suggested that the Strategy Table consider aligning its funding priorities and application processes with existing government entities to create more consistent expectations and standards for all types of grantmaking. The focus group explained that, by aligning overall strategies, grant criteria, and goals, the Strategy Table can ensure that its resources are directed towards the same opportunities as government entities, like the Legislature or the federal government. Public funders discussed the Government Results and Opportunity (GRO) expendable trust fund as a notable new mechanism the state is using to invest in innovative interventions. If the Strategy Table aligns its priorities with initiatives receiving appropriations from the GRO fund, grantees could leverage both funding sources to improve efficacy. The same strategy could also apply to congressionally directed spending (CDS) funds, also known as congressional earmarks.

**Analysis.** The aligned funding model could necessitate some level of compromise from the Strategy Table; rather than investing in the locally developed priorities stakeholders commonly ask for, the Strategy Table would place a large level of trust in the government that its priorities will be impactful. Additionally, without any formal mechanism for collaboration in place, there is no guarantee that public and philanthropic funders would routinely meet and agree on shared priorities, and further, no guarantee that those priorities would result in additional GRO or CDS funds.

## Matching Funds Model

Public funders also discussed the potential for philanthropic funds to act as matching funds to help organizations meet the requirements of public grants. Smaller organizations, particularly in rural and tribal communities, face barriers in providing matching funds required by many public grants. By offering philanthropic funds as a match, the Strategy Table could help organizations access larger public funding opportunities that they would otherwise be

unable to secure. This approach could increase the financial capacity of organizations to receive other grants, and may also improve sustainability through additional public resources.

**Analysis.** For a matching funds model to be successful, the Strategy Table would need to identify public grants for which it would act as matching funds, likely in partnership with government agencies. However, the Strategy Table would once again be reliant on government entities to set priorities and trust that the priorities will meet communities' needs. Further, If prospective grantees are unsuccessful in applying for and receiving public funds, any "matching funds" provided would be squandered, limiting the Strategy Table's impact.

## Pooled Funds Model

Finally, public funders considered a mechanism where federal, state, private, and tribal funds could be combined into a single pool, overseen by a diverse, multi-agency commission or council with representation from state, federal, and Tribal governments as well as private funders. The focus group discussed how this type of model could strategically allocate resources and leverage the strengths of multiple funding sources. A pooled funds model would allow for larger and more comprehensive projects than the current model of individual, uncoordinated funding streams. The pooled fund could be governed by a diverse council or commission, which would be tasked with setting agreed-upon priorities and criteria, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

**Analysis.** A pool of public and private funds with oversight from a council or commission gives the Strategy Table a greater level of control over its funds than the other models discussed; the Strategy Table would have a formal mechanism through the oversight commission to ensure that the priorities were in alignment with the needs of individual communities. However, for this reason, it is likely the most difficult and time consuming model to execute. Creating a specific mechanism for pooling funds and making collaborative investments is a significant undertaking that will require a great deal of coordination and collaboration. State representatives also emphasized that the power of appropriation decisions, one of the state Legislature's most cherished duties, would still need to reside within the democratic process.

# Recommendations for Coordinated Investment Strategies and Meaningful Partnerships with Government Entities

Given the findings discussed throughout this report, the following recommendations were developed as elements of a coordinated, aligned investment strategy. A focus group of public funders including representatives from the state Legislature, Tribal leadership, New Mexico federal congressional delegation staff, and the executive branch of state government met with members of the Strategy Table to **discuss coordinated philanthropic and public investment strategies to accomplish the Strategy Tables’ goals**. The coordinated investment strategy recommendations aim to contribute to more meaningful partnerships between government entities, Tribes, Nations and Pueblos, and public funders, resulting in a greater amount of public funding to serve communities in northern New Mexico.

The coordinated strategy includes seven specific recommendations organized around three guiding principles, as displayed in Table 6 below. This section includes stakeholder feedback detailed throughout this report and other sources as rationale to contextualize the recommendations. The recommendations include a set of proposed action steps to make meaningful progress toward implementation, as well as proposed indicators and measures to track progress. In addition, a set of community conversation vignettes accompany the recommendations, corroborating the alignment of the recommendations with stakeholders’ requests and visions.

**Table 6: Coordinated Investment Strategy and Mechanisms for Meaningful Partnerships with Government Entities**

Principle 1: Establish a procedure to co-design community-specific investments and grants	Principle 2: Pilot a public/ philanthropic investment funding model to foster innovation	Principle 3: Create a grant application clearinghouse and provide regional implementation support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recommendation 1a: Authentically connect with Northern New Mexico</li> <li>● Recommendation 1b: Align investments with community needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recommendation 2a: Create a mechanism to pool private and public funds</li> <li>● Recommendation 2b: Design for sustainability</li> <li>● Recommendation 2c: Measure outcomes and impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recommendation 3a: Create a grant application clearinghouse and a universal grant application to enable funders to better align and coordinate grantmaking</li> <li>● Recommendation 3b: Extend implementation support via regional hubs</li> </ul>

Q: How can the Strategy Table ensure grants respond to the needs of individual communities?

**Principle 1:**

**Establish a procedure to co-design community-specific investments and grants**

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*"What if philanthropic investments felt more like these convenings? Coming into a community to hear about our needs and assets rather than the school in the community fitting itself into a grant?"*

*We've got things already that we know work for our community, we just need help keeping them going and getting help to more of our kids."*

- Las Vegas, New Mexico Community Conversation



### **Recommendation 1a: Authentically connect with Northern New Mexico**

**Hold regular community convenings to develop deeper understandings of individual communities, and use those understandings to build community-specific strategies.**

**Rationale:**

- Stakeholders in Northern New Mexico asked that the Strategy Table adapt its programs to meet the unique cultural, economic, and demographic needs of communities (p. 11)
- There are opportunities to better leverage existing community organizations and other assets (p. 10-11)
- Stakeholders asked for performance metrics and rubrics to be co-created in direct consultation with programs and communities (p. 12)
- Tribal communities asked for place-based funding models, requiring a deeper understanding of the individual, unique communities in which the Strategy Table is investing (p. 15)
- Community convenings would allow the Strategy Table to directly engage with youth in Northern New Mexico communities. Youth gave strong feedback on the eight interventions, stating that the interventions do not always help navigate life transitions or provide the practical skills they need to succeed in the real world ([Appendix A](#))
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report recommends that the Strategy Table share networks of partners and grantees to build a single powerful, connected network (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 62)
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report also recommends that the Strategy Table use its influence to advocate for policies that impact the communities it serves (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 60)

- Action Plan:**
- Review [Appendix B](#), describing the unique challenges and assets in each community engaged in this report.
  - Schedule regular community convenings to encourage organizations to network, share successes, challenges, and stories, and teach best practices
  - Invite Northern New Mexican youth and young adults to community convenings and amplify their voice
  - Develop collaborative missions and visions with individual communities
  - Develop collaborative performance metrics and rubrics with programs and communities
  - Consider how organizations' stories can be incorporated in the grant application process, especially via a common or universal grant application.

- Indicators/ Measures:**
- Number of community convenings annually
  - Number of participant organizations from each county engaged in community convenings
  - Number of Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos engaged in community convenings
  - Number of youth engaged during community convenings
  - Number of organizations with collaboratively developed missions and visions
  - Qualitative feedback on value of community convenings, including satisfaction and suggested improvements
  - Qualitative feedback on perceived change in depth of relationships



## Recommendation 1b: Align investments with community needs

**Focus initial investments on innovations and initiatives in-demand from youth and rated highly by funded organizations.**

- Rationale:**
- Stakeholders believe youth development and leadership, work-based learning, and career pathways and CTE are the highest value interventions in the Strategy Table's arsenal to promote holistic young adult development (p. 8)
  - Youth and young adults emphasize that these supports have helped them develop the practical skills necessary for critical life transitions, including financial decision making and college/career choices. Youth believe leadership development programs are effective, but may not be available to all students (p. 15)
  - Stakeholders and youth and young adults have feedback related to the Strategy Table's definitions of youth development and leadership, work-based learning, and career pathways that may improve program development and delivery ([Appendix A](#))
  - In addition to increasing resources available, allocating those resources proportional to stakeholder priorities could result in both additional funds and greater impact for valuable initiatives (p. 9)

- Action Plan:**
- Review [Appendix A](#), which provides detailed feedback on the Strategy Table’s eight interventions, including feedback from youth and young adults
  - Understand the high demand for youth development and leadership, work-based learning, and navigating transitions from stakeholders and youth
  - Update the intervention lists and definitions in response to stakeholder feedback
  - Establish clear principles and criteria for a set of priority interventions
  - Provide a set of “best practices” for priority interventions

- Indicators/ Measures:**
- Number of grants available for community-identified priority programs, including youth development and leadership, work-based learning, and career pathways and CTE
  - Aggregate amount of funding available for priority programs
  - Aggregate amount of funding granted for priority programs
  - Community satisfaction with availability of priority grant programs
  - Young adult satisfaction with priority programs
  - Change in grant application frequency related to community satisfaction

Q: What funding model / mechanism can enable public and philanthropic funders to have more meaningful partnerships and better leverage federal, tribal, state and local funding to have greater impact on the target populations?

**Principle 2:**

**Pilot a public/philanthropic investment funding model to foster innovation**

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*"To build meaningful partnerships with the state and federal government, philanthropy has an opportunity to take risks and bet big on new and innovative ideas to see what pans out and rises to the top.*

*At the state, we need to know what works so that we can fund it in a sustainable way over the long term. The dozens of pilot programs we run at the state rarely pan out because of bureaucracy and implementation challenges that are less prevalent in private funding.*

*The funders should experiment and pilot, knowing that the state is eager to fund what we can be sure has a measurable impact with our students. Not all of the projects have to be a success - we just need to know which ones worked and to figure that out you may have several that don't."*

-Espanola, New Mexico Community Conversation

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## Recommendation 2a: Create a mechanism to pool private and public funds

Create a proof of concept to pool funds between federal, state, tribal, and private funders, and a mechanism to make grants from the fund.

### Rationale:

- Pooling resources from diverse funding sources amplifies participants' overall financial capacity, enabling larger and more impactful investments
- A collaborative funding model can promote transparency and accountability by establishing shared goals, metrics, and evaluation processes
- A pooled funding strategy would ensure that resources are allocated to shared priority areas, highlighting the most effective programs and addressing the greatest needs
- Funders rated "exploring multi-sector fund options" among their top three priorities for securing matching funds. Funders appear to have a high degree of interest in creating a dedicated fund, rather than piecemeal approaches to matching funds (Federal Funds Report, p. 11)
- Stakeholders rated "identifying shared interests and objectives" as a high-value strategy for aligning stakeholder and funder goals ([Appendix D](#))
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report recommends the Strategy Table pool its resources, including funds, data, staff capacity, and skill sets (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 62)
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report also recommends that the Strategy Table determine where private investments align with public investments (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 57)

### Action Plan:

- Work with public and private stakeholders to identify shared priorities
- Create and pilot a specific mechanism to pool funds, like a statutorily-created fund with explicit uses
- Ensure pilot mechanism can leverage the state Government Results and Opportunity (GRO) expendable trust, Congressionally directed spending (CDS) funds.
- Create a governance structure, like a council or commission, to determine how pooled funds will be allocated
- Ensure youth voice is represented in the governance council or commission
- Use deep understanding of communities to advocate for their specific needs in the uses of the fund, supporting collaboratively-developed missions and visions
- Develop a Return on Investment Evaluation plan in collaboration with the communities served that quantifies the impact of both the program and the shared investment

### Indicators/ Measures

- Alignment of funding and goals among fund contributors
- Diverse, qualified representation on investment pool council or commission
- Number of public agencies contributing to investment pool
- Number of private philanthropic funders contributing to investment pool
- Number of tribal governments contributing to investment pool
- Dollars invested in pool
- Impact and return on investment for funded programs and pooling funding



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"The only person from the community that knew how to run the water system moved away. So now we have to pay a \$250,000 contract to an out of state 'expert.'

Imagine if our students could run the water system? What if they could get paid and get credit for doing so - validating their learning in a community setting? Then we wouldn't need to go out of state for the contract, and our youth and young adults would stay engaged by serving the community. The village council and the school wouldn't really need help dreaming about this.

We can dream the dream. We would need resources to get started with technicalities and help for when we get stuck along the way."

-Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico Community Conversation

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## Recommendation 2b: Design for sustainability

**Design flexible three- to five-year sustained grants, including support for day-to-day operations, with regular monitoring and check-ins.**

### Rationale:

- Sustainability of programs is a common challenge among stakeholders (p. 13)
- Longer funding cycles can help organizations to grow and sustain programs over time, providing stability and enabling long term planning
- Longer funding cycles can also reduce the number of applications organizations are required to fill out, allowing organizations to focus on program delivery (p. 13)
- Organizations asked that grant funds be allowed to support the day-to-day operations in addition to program delivery (p. 13)
- Grants should be flexible enough to adapt to changing educational landscapes (p. 13)
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report recommends that the Strategy Table change the length and structure of the grant cycle to match grantee needs, and that the structure of grants be designed to allow greater flexibility (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 64)

### Action Plan:

- Consider grants for which longer funding cycles are appropriate
- Consider criteria for automatic annual renewal of funding
- Review existing grants to ensure they provide support for day-to-day operations
- Review existing grants to ensure they are flexible enough to adapt to changing needs

### Indicators/ Measures:

- Change in average length of grants
- Community satisfaction with grant application processes and provisions
- Community satisfaction with perceptions of flexibility
- Aggregate amount of funding granted for organizations' operational costs
- Average percent of individual grants dedicated to operational costs



## Recommendation 2c: Measure outcomes and impact

Using feedback directly from grantees and communities, develop grant-specific goals to measure outcomes and impact aligned with community missions and visions.

### Rationale:

- Stakeholders asked for a set of clearly-defined goals accompanied with support to track measurable, yet accessible, metrics, with a focus on progress and implementation metrics (p. 13)
- Stakeholders rated monitoring and evaluation as the highest-value strategy for building capacity in current practice (Appendix D, p. 41)
- Measuring outcomes and impact ensures that funded programs are meeting their intended objectives, allowing funders to focus on the effectiveness of programs
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report recommends that the Strategy Table commit to continued data sharing between the Strategy Table and its grantees (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 61)

### Action Plan:

- Engage grantees in the development of grant-specific outcome measures
- Collect and evaluate data based on collaborative measures
- Establish mechanisms to provide regular, timely feedback to grantees, allowing them to adjust and improve in real-time
- Connect grantees to individualized support based on identified needs
- Communicate results and impact publicly, incentivizing greater investments for effective programs

### Indicators/ Measures:

- Number/percent of grants designed with collaborative performance measures
- Number/percent of collaborative performance measures met on time with fidelity
- Grantee satisfaction with process to set collaborative performance measures
- Number of times support is offered to struggling grantees
- Grantee satisfaction with supports provided to better meet performance measures
- Returns on investments for funded programs

Q: What funding mechanism could make it easier for organizations and entities to seek and secure public and philanthropic funding?

**Principle 3:**

**Create a grant application clearinghouse and provide regional implementation support**



**Recommendation 3a: Create a grant application clearinghouse and a universal grant application to enable funders to better align and coordinate grantmaking**

**Create an easy-to-use grant application portal with information about private, state, federal, and tribal government grants to improve transparency for grant applications.**

**Rationale:**

- Stakeholders asked for a simple, transparent, streamlined funding process to reduce bureaucracy and paperwork (p. 13)
- A lack of capacity is a common barrier preventing organizations from accessing grants (Federal Funds Report, p. 8)
- Organizations are not always aware of the different funding sources that are available, especially considering the numerous federal grants, state grants, and tribal government grants that may be available
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report recommends the use of a grant platform like the “JustFund” platform created to connect grantors and grantees to wide networks that can efficiently match needs to available resources (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 63)
- The *Investing in College and Career Pathways* report also recommends investing in a system to track data on public resources, especially one that allows easy sharing with partners and grantees (*Investing in College and Career Pathways* report, p. 57)
- A consolidated grant information clearinghouse can help Strategy Table members evaluate their own investments compared with government agencies as well as other organizations, reducing duplication and creating opportunities for collaboration
- The state of New Mexico recently created a Department of Finance and Administration Infrastructure office that could be a support for creating a statewide clearinghouse

- Action Plan:**
- Build or contract to build an online grant information clearinghouse, to include information on the following grant types:
    - Strategy Table grants
    - Other philanthropic grants
    - Local Grants
    - State grants
    - Federal grants
    - Tribal government grants
  - Consider which of the Strategy Table's grants may be strong candidates for a common grant application shared by Strategy Table members
  - Identify the common information needed from all grant applicants.
  - Ensure the minimum information is available on each grant:
    - Grant amount
    - Timeframe
    - Eligibility criteria
    - Evaluation metrics
  - Ensure the grant information clearinghouse can be filtered by eligibility criteria, organization type, or other identifiers important for organizations to find grants

- Indicators/  
Measures:**
- Number/dollar amount of grants available on clearinghouse, disaggregated by funding source (federal/state/tribal/private)
  - Number of organizations subscribed/accessing grants on clearinghouse
  - Change in number of organizations applying for grants
  - Change in number of organizations receiving funds
  - Change in lower-capacity or newer organizations applying for and receiving grants
  - Grant clearinghouse engagement and satisfaction
  - Relationship between grant platform engagement and award amounts
  - Change in perceptions of barriers to funding
  - Return on investment of clearinghouse platform

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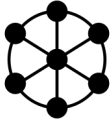
*"Align the amount of the grant award with the amount of energy to apply. And if you are going to have funders coordinate on a big grant, there should be a universal grant application with a broad list of uses with up front technical support and co-writing opportunities that allow for non-profits that don't have as much capacity to compete with the grant writers at the large non-profits.*

*There should be a tool kit for awardees that supports whatever the data requirements and evaluation components are for the grant.*

*Also maybe consider a youth-council that reviews the grants and weighs in on who gets awarded."*

-Taos, New Mexico Community Conversation

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### Recommendation 3b: Extend implementation support via regional hubs

Create regional “hubs” to assist individual regions in navigating the grant application process, evaluation, and organizational development.

#### Rationale:

- Organizations identified low capacity and a lack of grant writers as consistent barriers to philanthropic funds (Appendix D, p. 43)
- Funders generally agree that providing access to grant technical assistance and consulting services is a strong fit for a consolidated statewide effort (Federal Funds Report, p. 12)
- Creating regional hubs can allow “community liaisons” to work closely with grantees, develop strong relationships, and build deeper understandings of the communities the Strategy Table serves

#### Action Plan

- Hire community liaisons to become experts on individual communities
- Coordinate targeted funding to regional intermediaries to build their capacity to support regional grantees in applying for, securing, and managing funding
- Develop a “toolkit” of best practices for each of the following organizational domains
  - Navigating the grant information clearinghouse
  - Writing a grant application
  - Fiscal management
  - Developing organizational capacity
  - Program evaluation
- Offer professional development opportunities to support and develop capacity skills.

#### Indicators/ Measures:

- Number of regional hubs established or enhanced
- Number of organizations supported by each regional hub
- Types of supports offered by regional hubs
- Grantee and community satisfaction with regional hubs
- Number/percent of supported organizations that successfully receive grants
- Number/percent of supported organizations that show evidence of improved implementation
- Returns on investments for regional intermediaries

## Conclusion and Next Steps

The findings from Phase II of the Northern New Mexico Pathways to Opportunity (NNMP2O) Strategy Table's analysis of its investment strategy underscore the critical need for aligning investments with the unique needs and priorities of the communities served. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement revealed vital insights into the effectiveness of current interventions, highlighted significant challenges and barriers, and identified key opportunities for improvement. In addition, diverse input from youth, educators, Tribal communities, nonprofit organizations, and public funders provides a strong foundation for refining and enhancing the Strategy Table's investment approach.

By holding regular community convenings, the Strategy Table can develop deeper understandings of local needs and create opportunities to co-design grants in direct consultation with community members. This process also has potential to amplify youth voices and ensure that performance metrics are collaboratively developed with program participants will be crucial to this approach. As it builds strategies with local communities, the Strategy Table will need to explore placing a more substantial focus on prioritizing interventions that stakeholders have identified as high-value, such as youth development and leadership, work-based learning, and career pathways and career technical education (CTE). To ensure the sustainability and adaptability of these programs, the Strategy Table can consider implementing flexible, multi-year grants that provide comprehensive support for both program delivery and operational needs.

In addition to local investment plans, the Strategy Table stands poised to establish a collaborative investment model that pools resources from private, public, state, federal, and Tribal sources to maximize the impact of those funds. The pooled strategy offers the Strategy Table meaningful control over its investments and guarantees a formal mechanism for collaboration among the many members that contribute to the fund. While the process may be lengthy and difficult, it will be well worth the effort to create a meaningful lasting partnership between public and private entities, an event unprecedented in recent New Mexico history.

To further streamline funding and improve access, the Strategy Table will also need to consider creating an easy-to-use online grant application clearinghouses, with information about private, state, federal, and Tribal grants. This grant application portal will enhance transparency and simplify the application process for organizations, many of which struggle with a lack of capacity to apply for funds. Regional hubs can also be established to provide communities with the necessary support for grant applications, program evaluation, and organizational development. These hubs will offer professional development and operational support to help nonprofits build capacity and sustain their efforts.

By aligning its investments with community-specific needs and enhancing collaborative efforts internally and among external stakeholders, the Strategy Table can build a coordinated investment strategy to better support the development and well-being of young adults in Northern New Mexico, ensuring that investments are effective, impactful, and sustained for years to come

# Appendix A. Feedback on The Eight Interventions

## Youth Development and Leadership

**Strategy Table Definition:** Approaches that are culturally responsive, asset-based and engage the whole person by: supporting development of social-emotional and leadership skills and networks fostering positive intergenerational and peer-to-peer relationships and mentoring providing opportunities for civic engagement in schools and communities centering and amplifying youth voice, expertise, and decision-making.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

<b>Weighted Priority Score</b> Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	<b>Definition Rating</b> Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	<b>Value Rating</b> Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
85 (Tie - Rank 1)	4.66 / 5 (Rank 1)	3.90 / 5 (Rank 3)

### Opportunities to Improve Definition

- **Consider how to best engage youth.** It may be difficult to motivate youth to pursue a development and leadership program. Potential solutions shared by respondents include integration of the arts, integration of job opportunities, and expansion to two-year and branch campuses of higher education institutions.
- **Help youth identify their passion.** The definition of youth development and leadership could better emphasize supporting youth in finding their passion and identifying their skills to fuel their growth. Funding can prioritize programs that focus on helping youth discover what they care about and what they excel at.
- **Center self-determination and self-advocacy.** Respondents highlighted the importance of self-determination, dignity of risk, and self-advocacy in youth development and leadership, indicating a desire to empower youth to take control of their own paths and decisions.
- **Promote gender-specific approaches.** Respondents suggested that different approaches may be necessary for different genders in youth development and leadership programs. The definition could demonstrate a nuanced understanding of how motivations and barriers differ between young men and women.

### Young Adult Perspectives

- Good leaders are confident, take initiative, are good listeners, have strong self-control, and are effective public speakers.
- Families and communities play a critical role in leadership development.
- Leadership skills are commonly learned through extracurricular clubs and sports, but not everybody participates in these activities.
- Leadership training can be better integrated in academics to ensure all students have access, not just those who self-select into certain activities.

*"More can be done to build student confidence. Not everyone has the confidence to recognize the leadership skills they already possess."*



## Work-Based Learning

**Strategy Table Definition:** Collaboratively engage and support employers and training providers in providing inclusive, culturally-responsive and ongoing structured learning experiences and meaningful mentorship for individuals, particularly students and youth and young adults, to support workforce readiness.

This work includes: facilitation of the student/employer relationship; alignment between work experiences and education pathways; application of academic credit, where appropriate; formal, transferable professional skill development and support for infrastructure and training for employers and mentors.

Types of work-based learning include internships, cooperative education, career awareness, career exploration, on-the-job training, work-experience, transitional jobs, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

<b>Weighted Priority Score</b> Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	<b>Definition Rating</b> Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	<b>Value Rating</b> Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
85 (Tie - Rank 1)	4.58 / 5 (Rank 2)	3.98 / 5 (Rank 1)

## Opportunities to Improve Definition

- **Consider the specific types of skills participants should develop.** Survey respondents explained work-based learning is as much about learning job skills as it is about learning social-emotional skills. The definition could explicitly mention the development of social and emotional skills as a
- **Allow space for innovative models.** While the definition lists several activities that constitute work-based learning, respondents noted an opportunity to explicitly allow innovative approaches to work-based learning, which may include integration of work-based learning with academic interventions or a model where an institution may employ all students who attend the institution.

*"My supervisor in my current job is great. She is awesome to work for and she takes the time to teach me things. A good supervisor is key to learning on the job."*



## Young Adult Perspectives

- Hands-on, experiential learning opportunities are valuable because they prepare students for real-world job demands.
- Work-studies, internships, and part-time job opportunities are rare; engagement with local businesses appears to be a barrier.
- Schools should offer credit for work experiences, acknowledging the educational value of practical skill acquisition.



## Career Pathways and Career Technical Education

**Strategy Table Definition:** A program of study starting as early as middle-school that involves a flexible, multi-year sequence of courses, learning experiences and supports that integrate core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge and soft skills development. This includes offering and supporting students in navigating multiple options and leveraging hands-on learning opportunities in specific careers / industries, including CTE and other disciplines, to provide them with a certificate, degree and/or a pathway to postsecondary education and/or viable careers.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

<b>Weighted Priority Score</b> Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	<b>Definition Rating</b> Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	<b>Value Rating</b> Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
67 (Rank 3)	4.46 / 5 (Tie - Rank 6)	3.92 / 5 (Rank 2)

### Opportunities to Improve Definition:

- **Clarify definition.** The definition would benefit from a complete copy-edit to improve clarity and reduce wordiness.
- **Specify how employers are engaged in this work.** Respondents expressed that the definition should include how individual employers can be engaged in the development of career pathways and CTE programs; partnerships with employers are important for providing students with relevant skills and connections to the workforce.
- **Center human relationships.** Respondents highlighted the importance of coaching, mentoring, and access to supportive relationships with adults as successful elements of CTE programs.
- **Consider culturally responsive programming.** CTE programs should be culturally informed, particularly for Native American students. One respondent shared that learning about Chaco Canyon may be an example of Indigenous engineering, which could help Native youth connect to their potential identities in engineering and science.

### Young Adult Perspectives

- Youth and young adults have strong personal motivations or circumstances that drive their career choices, like family backgrounds or personal experiences.
- School career guidance services are not integrated in a way that helps students understand the connection between education and careers.
- Career technical education opportunities don't always align with the diverse fields in which students are interested.

*"Adapt to the industries that are taking off now. Film, computer science, media arts... why are we not seeing classes like this flooding into our schools? Change with the times."*



## College Preparation Support

**Strategy Table Definition:** Provides early and consistent support to students, adult learners, and their families with academic, social-emotional, financial, and college planning resources to raise awareness of college options and help students overcome barriers to college enrollment and persistence.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

Weighted Priority Score Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	Definition Rating Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	Value Rating Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
42 (Rank 4)	4.46 / 5 (Tie - Rank 4)	3.92 / 5 (Rank 2)

### Opportunities to Improve Definition:

- **Consider More Comprehensive Supports.** College preparation can also include holistic student supports, like meeting students' basic needs and ensuring they receive early developmental preparation in core subjects like reading and math.
- **Embed Exposure and Comfort with Post-Secondary Spaces.** Students who feel more comfortable on college campuses may feel more prepared to take the next step and go to college; consider providing opportunities for students and families to experience and understand college environments through camps, open-campus events, and other interactive experiences.

*Quit trying to make everyone go to college -- spend your time on those of us that really want to go. We lose valuable time and resources waiting for the adults to drag along someone who never really wanted to be there in the first place.*



*Everyone should be honest about the true benefits of earning a college degree. Be honest about the student debt, the ho-hum jobs you get with the degree, the actual demand for the dream jobs you thought you were going to get. Adults like to sugar coat the reality of earning a college degree.*



- **Examine Overlap with Other Areas of Investment.** Students who receive youth development and leadership training or work-based learning opportunities may gain valuable social, emotional, and academic skills and be more prepared to attend college, even if they don't receive direct college preparation resources.
- **Understand Relevance and Cultural Identities.** College should be an option for all students, but may not be the right option for every student. Sometimes, asking youth to go to college is comparable to asking them to give up their families and their culture.

### Young Adult Perspectives

- Youth and young adults believe current college preparation efforts focus too heavily on academics, rather than the practical and life skills needed to succeed in college.
- Gaps include understanding the financial implications of college education, support for navigating college entry processes, and relevant advice from counselors and educators.
- Some youth and young adults explained they received little to no information about scholarships, college preparation, and career opportunities, suggesting access is not equitable among all students.
- College is not for everyone, but sometimes youth feel like adults are pushing everyone to go to college.

## High School/GED Completion Supports

**Strategy Table Definition:** Provide opportunity youth with academic, social and personal supports to re/engage with and complete high school/GED-HSE programs, and continue their education and career pathways. Services should be accessible and responsive to each student's unique life circumstances

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

<b>Weighted Priority Score</b> Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	<b>Definition Rating</b> Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	<b>Value Rating</b> Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
29 (Rank 5)	4.42 / 5 (Tie - Rank 6)	3.71 / 5 (Rank 4)

### Opportunities to Improve Definition

- **Life Skills Development.** Emphasize the integration building practical, lifelong support skills, ensuring educators. Establish mentorship and coaching programs to offer individualized support, and provide childcare support to help students with children attend classes.
- **Trauma-Informed Approaches.** Ensure high school and GED completion programs are trauma-informed, considering the multitude of root causes behind students' original disengagement. This serves as an element of ensuring programs are responsive to students' unique life circumstances.
- **Parental and Community Engagement** Develop programs to enhance parental support and guidance, creating communication strategies to inform students and parents about GED options. Facilitate advisory sessions to help students and parents understand post-GED career paths, and build partnerships with community organizations to support student needs.
- **Consider the "Next Step" After High School.** Ensure programs provide some level of one-on-one coaching with students to develop individualized career plans and ensure students have access to information on vocational training and further education opportunities. Integrate career planning and capacity-building into high school and GED completion programs, such as offering workshops on post-GED career options and pathways.
- **Covid-19 Re Engagement and Continuity.** Consider funding outreach programs to reconnect students lost during the pandemic, developing clear pathways for students to return to high school or pursue a GED. Offer flexible scheduling and alterNative learning options to accommodate diverse needs, ensuring seamless transitions between high school, GED programs, and post-secondary opportunities.

### Young Adult Voices

- While re-engagement in high school is important, it is more important to youth and young adults that when they finish high school, they are equipped with the skills they need to succeed in life.
- Some youth and young adults explained the tradeoffs between high school diplomas and GEDs are not explained well.

*Panic mode sets in when you reach senior year and realize how poorly prepared you are for the real world. Taking an online class doesn't really prepare you. It's baptism by fire. You have to learn the hard way.*



## College Completion Supports/Scholarships

**Strategy Table Definition:** Support students in accessing and navigating college and community resources and building meaningful relationships to achieve successful college completion, attainment of meaningful employment, and conditions necessary to thrive. College and community resources may include (but are not limited to) childcare, mental health supports, food and shelter, academic advising, financial assistance and aid, tutoring, career services, and other wrap-around services.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

<b>Weighted Priority Score</b> Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	<b>Definition Rating</b> Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	<b>Value Rating</b> Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
21 (Rank 6)	4.46 / 5 (Tie - Rank 4)	3.59 / 5 (Tie - Rank 7)

### Opportunities to Improve Definition:

- **Support Services for youth and young adults with Disabilities.** Increase resources for scholarships and other supports for students with IEPs and those transitioning to higher education. Enhance funding for disability support services at colleges, and develop a shared lexicon for student support services to streamline funding and advocacy efforts.
- **Career and Professional Development.** Strengthen connections between college programs and industry opportunities, facilitating internships, job placements, and entry-level position connections. Create outreach initiatives for students interested in trade schools or certifications.
- **Family and Community Engagement.** Involve family support in college completion programs as a potential mechanism to ensure students are successful in college.
- **Consider the Role of High Schools.** Develop partnerships between high schools, colleges, and third-party organizations for seamless, continuous student support. Ensure ease of access for support services for incoming freshmen.
- **Student-Centered Support Systems:** Offer 1-on-1 support and mentoring for students, simplifying access to support services and resources. Ensure students know how to find and utilize necessary information for academic success.

*I had to change my major from computer science to business; after multiple attempts, I couldn't pass Chemistry.*

*I had to change my major from nursing to business, I also couldn't pass Chemistry.*

*Honestly, the best motivation to finish college has been to have a really sucky job. I hated it so much it made me want to stay in school and finish so I can do something I really want to do.*

### Young Adult Perspectives

- A lack of academic readiness for college is a primary reason students are unable to complete college.
- Youth often have to change majors to less technical majors to finish a degree, making compromises to leave STEM fields for business degrees.
- Students are also unable to finish college when their financial support runs dry. Online classes can help reduce costs while students are living at home.

## Access to Financial Tools

**Strategy Table Definition:** Provides youth with culturally relevant, age appropriate financial capability education and resources (e.g. non-predatory bank accounts and lenders, and asset based tools) to help youth take full advantage of economic opportunities in society.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

Weighted Priority Score Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	Definition Rating Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	Value Rating Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
17 (Rank 7)	4.42 / 5 (Tie - Rank 6)	3.59 / 5 (Rank 6)

### Opportunities to Improve Definition

- **Inclusive Financial Education.** Ensure cultural relevance in financial literacy addresses the needs of undocumented youth and their families in financial education programs, offering classes on taxes, investing, saving, and personal financial responsibility.
- **Focus on Practical Financial Concepts.** Ensure students are able to authentically connect with financial literacy concepts by providing relevant and applicable lessons about banking, taking out loans, applying for credit, or investing in the stock market. Consider initiatives like state-sponsored education savings plans for all K-12 students as a tangible way to help students learn about their own money.
- **Clarify the term "economic opportunities."** Ensure funded organizations are clear about the types of "economic opportunities" students should have access to, potentially by providing tangible examples.

*My parents try to teach me about money, but I'm old enough to realize now that my parents are not very good with money. I don't really want to learn it from them.*



*Family doesn't always know how to teach youth about money. I wish I was taught how to do big important things like buying a house, buying a car, how to make payments – do people still write checks? Is it safe to pay for things online?*



### Young Adult Voices

- Youth and young adults wished they had access to financial education focused on real-world application, like managing debts, understanding banking options, and making informed spending decisions.
- Current financial education opportunities are either too theoretical or disconnected from students' daily realities, which often leads to a lack of engagement and information retention.
- Some youth and young adults explained they took financial literacy at too young of an age to understand the real value of money, making it difficult to connect with the concepts.
- Financial education is important because families don't always have the knowledge or skills to teach their children about money.

*I don't want to live paycheck to paycheck. What does a realistic budget look like? I hear things like making a paycheck go further, what does that even mean?*



## Entrepreneurial Training

**Strategy Table Definition:** Entrepreneurial Training Support that provides youth and young adults with opportunities to develop entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation, problem solving, risk-taking, leadership and community oriented mindsets and skill sets. Support that can promote enterprise development and ownership and/or strengthens connections between communities, schools, and the private sector.

### Average Stakeholder Ratings:

<b>Weighted Priority Score</b> Calculated based on stakeholder ranking of 'first', 'second' and 'third' priorities	<b>Definition Rating</b> Average of stakeholder ratings of the Strategy Table's definition	<b>Value Rating</b> Average of stakeholders' perceptions of the value of the intervention
8 (Rank 8)	4.42 / 5 (Rank 8)	3.59 / 5 (Tie - Rank 7)

## Opportunities to Improve Definition

- **Consider Overlap with Other Interventions.** While business concepts are important, they may not be relevant for all students. Students who pursue business ownership as a career technical education pathway or a work-based learning opportunity can develop an understanding of entrepreneurial concepts, while others may not rate the knowledge as a high priority. In addition, leadership skills are essential for entrepreneurship and may be developed in youth leadership development programs.
- **Consider Training on Ethical Considerations.** Incorporate ethical aspects of business ownership into the curriculum, emphasizing the importance of contributing to community and society. Include culturally responsive models in entrepreneurial training programs, and use examples and models that highlight community impact and ethical practices.
- **Community Connections.** Ensure programs promote access to mentors and successful entrepreneurial endeavors by establishing partnerships with local businesses and organizations to provide hands-on experiences. Consider creating a community space for young entrepreneurs to share ideas and collaborate.

## Young Adult Voices

- Youth and young adults explained they received little to no formal education about business concepts or entrepreneurship in their schools.
- Youth spoke highly of the outside-of-school opportunities they had to learn how to run a business, including in family-owned businesses, school-based shops, and community businesses.
- Young people are enthusiastic about more structured and formal educational opportunities that would provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to consider business ownership as a viable career path.

*Students should have to manage a small school sponsored business to really learn what it is like.*



## Appendix B. Crosswalk of Persistent Themes by Region

Theme	Northern Rio Arriba	San Miguel	Taos	Southern Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Los Alamos	Sandoval	Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos
<b>Strategy</b>						
Promote Holistic Young Adult Development			X	X	X	X
Develop Community-Specific Strategies	X	X		X	X	X
Support Inclusive and Diverse Opportunities	X		X			X
Set Goals and Measure Outcomes and Impact		X		X		
<b>Funding</b>						
Streamline Funding and Administrative Processes	X		X	X	X	X
Sustain Investments over the Long-Term	X			X	X	
Allow Flexibility for Adaptations	X	X		X		
Include Technical and Operational Support for Nonprofits			X			X
<b>Collaboration</b>						
Provide Structured Opportunities for Networking and Partnerships		X			X	
Improve Communication and Clearly Define Roles			X	X		
Build Bridges to Youth, Families, and Communities	X		X			X
Strategically Design Grants to Incentivize Best Practices			X			

# Appendix C. Community-Specific Assets and Challenges

During stakeholder engagement sessions, communities commonly asked the Strategy Table to consider their unique, individualized contexts, both in the design of grants and in the provision of technical and operational support. Stakeholders provided insights on their current challenges and assets and opportunities they believe play a role in changing the lives of youth and young adults. As the Strategy Table considers improvements to its investment strategy, it should also consider the following challenges, assets, and opportunities identified by youth, educators, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other community members in each of the counties.

## Northern Rio Arriba County

### Community-Specific Challenges

- **Funding Constraints and Allocation Issues.** Limited funding impacts schools' ability to sponsor activities or to hire staff for non-traditional roles. In addition, a lack of consistent funding over time harms schools ability to sustain programs and requires schools to seek new funding sources constantly.
- **Low Parental and Community Engagement.** Several responses focused on the challenges of engaging parents and families in educational processes and school activities. Issues such as cultural norms about discussing challenges and limited parental involvement in schools affect both student outcomes and community support for education funding initiatives (like bond issues).

### Community-Specific Assets and Opportunities

- **College and Career Pathways.** Stakeholders noted both challenges and successes in providing pathways to higher education and careers. Opportunities such as dual credit programs and work-based learning are valuable, but there's also a need for more comprehensive support for students without traditional family resources, highlighting the importance of financial supports and scholarships.
- **Skill Development in Out-of-School or Innovative Settings.** Participants recognized the value in innovative educational approaches, particularly in developing social-emotional learning (SEL) skills and financial literacy. Programs like Natural Helpers and suggestions for enhancing financial education show a desire for practical skills development that aligns with modern societal needs.
- **Sustainable community partnerships.** Responses suggest opportunities for stronger partnerships between educational institutions and local organizations or businesses, such as proposed internships with the village water system. This theme focuses on leveraging community resources for mutual benefit, enhancing practical learning opportunities for students.
- **Enhance Work-Based Learning.** There is a strong emphasis on the importance of work-based learning and entrepreneurial skills as essential tools for career pathways and real-world preparation. Stakeholders believe these programs not only provide necessary job skills but also foster social-emotional learning (SEL) and leadership development, especially important in the post-Covid generation.



## San Miguel County

### Community-Specific Challenges

- **Difficulty with Staffing and Resources.** Participants explained it was difficult to find passionate and qualified staff to provide necessary interventions. Current staff have difficulty managing resources effectively, with time and transportation being large resource needs.
- **Structural and Accountability Systems.** The lack of a proper accountability system for program outcomes, including issues with organizing events and maintaining engagement during out-of-school periods, poses a significant barrier to success.
- **Burdensome Data Collection.** Extensive data collection requirements tied to funding can be burdensome and take focus away from the initiative itself. Stakeholders identified a need for an effective evaluation system that doesn't create burdens on staff.
- **Legal and Regulatory Flexibility.** Participants explained laws and regulations can be inflexible, which can impede the implementation of well-meaning programs, like community service projects.

### Community-Specific Assets and Opportunities

- **Effective Youth Development Programs.** Programs like the HOMEs Program are seen as highly effective, offering peer-to-peer help, mentoring, and coping skills development. Activities such as the Hispanic Roundtable Dinners, which facilitate networking and public speaking, are also noted for their success in fostering key communication and leadership skills among youth.
- **Work-Based Learning.** Integrating work-based learning with school standards and providing financial support for youth participation was identified as a successful strategy to engage students and provide real-world skills.
- **Financial and Educational Tools.** Effective use of financial tools and the promotion of certification in trades alongside high school diplomas are seen as valuable for helping students access higher education and career paths effectively.
- **Legislative and Funder Relationships.** Stakeholders wished they had direct personal relationships between funders and funded organizations. Participants suggested facilitating direct communication where funders can understand specific community needs and challenges, and creating opportunities for legislators and local politicians to hear directly from those benefiting from programs.

## Taos County

### Community-Specific Challenges

- **Grant Accessibility and Complexity.** The existing grant application and reporting systems are too complicated and time-consuming, especially for smaller organizations or those with limited administrative capacity. A significant gap in awareness about available grants, particularly state and local opportunities, which prevents organizations from accessing potential funding.
- **Youth Needs and Family Engagement.** Concerns about the impact of screens and phones on youth, indicating a need for programs that effectively address digital consumption. a lack of focused support on crucial

transitional stages in youth development, such as elementary to middle school, middle to high, and high school to further education or careers. Interventions often fail to sufficiently include parents and families, which is crucial for the holistic development of the youth.

- **Bureaucratic Challenges.** State government bureaucracy complicates the procurement process, making it difficult for local entities to access and utilize funds effectively. Challenges in navigating legal and administrative barriers that undermine local projects.
- **Resource Overlap and Competition.** Multiple organizations compete for the same funding sources, which can lead to redundancy in services and inefficient use of resources.

## Community-Specific Assets and Opportunities

- **Existing Community Structures.** Programs like the "100 percent community" offer established systems for alignment and coordination, which could be leveraged to enhance service delivery and program effectiveness.
- **Youth Development Initiatives.** Existing youth leadership initiatives that focus on peer-to-peer interactions and cultural awareness provide a strong foundation for community engagement and program delivery.
- **Entrepreneurial Training, Internships, and Mentorships.** Existing programs that offer mentorship, especially in entrepreneurship and paid internships, create organic opportunities for skill development and career readiness.
- **Community Schools Coalition.** The support for a county-wide community schools coalition indicates a strong base for educational and community partnership.
- **Enhance Work-Based Learning.** Paid internships should be leveraged not just for work experience but also as natural mentorship opportunities. College and career pathways integrate well with social and emotional learning; acquisition of social and emotional skills is a part of career preparation.

## Southern Rio Arriba County / Santa Fe County / Los Alamos County

### Community-Specific Challenges

- **Complexity and Bureaucracy.** Issues include red tape, unclear reporting standards, and the complexity of the grant application process which can be prohibitive, especially for smaller, rural districts that lack the capacity to manage these demands.
- **Siloed Operation and Lack of Collaboration.** Many programs operate in isolation without effective mechanisms for collaboration across different sectors and levels of government, leading to duplicated efforts and inefficient use of resources.
- **Inadequate Support for Transitioning Youth.** There is a gap in programs that effectively support youth transitioning from school to adulthood, including those not in school who still depend heavily on household support.

## Community-Specific Assets

- **Community and Cultural Strengths.** The strong sense of community and cultural identity can be leveraged to enhance educational programs and interventions, making them more relevant and effective for the local populace.
- **Existing Initiatives and Programs.** Despite challenges, there are several existing initiatives that can serve as a foundation for further development, such as community schools, holistic pathway programs, and innovative funding models that emphasize long-term investment.
- **Availability of Philanthropic Funding.** There is an opportunity to work more closely with philanthropic funders who are often more flexible than the state or federal government and willing to fund more innovative and creative ideas than government agencies.

## Sandoval County

### Community-Specific Challenges

- **Lack of Investment in Entrepreneurial Development.** Current state funding does not prioritize entrepreneurial programs, particularly for high school youth.
- **Insufficient College Preparation.** There is a gap in preparing students for college life, including essential life skills and career exploration, which leads to lower completion rates or mismatched career paths.
- **Complex Financial Education Needs.** Students need clearer explanations about financial decisions related to higher education, such as understanding FAFSA, student loans, loan forgiveness, and concepts like credit scores and delayed gratification.
- **Grant Application Complexity.** Local capacities are often insufficient to tackle the demanding process of applying for federal grants.
- **nonprofit Strain.** Most nonprofits, especially smaller ones led by minority women, face challenges in capacity and resource allocation, impacting their ability to sustain operations and deliver services.
- **Duplication of Services.** Funded programs often overlap, creating competition for the same resources. There's also a lack of coordinated efforts in providing career counseling in schools due to perceived duplication of roles.

### Community-Specific Assets

- **Existing Initiatives.** Programs like financial literacy, career exploration, and mental health supports exist but need expansion and integration into standard curriculums.
- **Community and Parental Engagement.** There's a strong desire among families and community members to support youth, particularly those not in school, which presents an opportunity for targeted support programs.
- **Current Support for Nonprofit Efforts.** Many organizations have received substantial support (e.g., McKinsey Scott funding), and there's potential to build on this with structured development training, like that offered by Georgetown.
- **Strong Foundations for Cooperation.** There are multiple platforms and initiatives, like Workforce Development's mobile app and community programs, that could serve as bases for enhanced collaborative efforts.

## Appendix D. Funding Priorities, Goal Alignment Strategies, Identifying and Addressing Gaps and Building Capacity

Respondents to the follow-up survey provided insight on the effectiveness of funding models and other specific strategies, including those strategies that are currently in use and other models that may be effective. In particular, the survey asked questions about funding models, goal alignment, braiding public and private funds, identifying and addressing gaps, and building capacity.

**Funding Priorities.** The survey asked respondents to rate the value of several funding priorities as they relate to meeting the Strategy Table’s goal, then asks whether respondents are engaged in a project using that type of support. Operating support and capacity-building grants are highly valued by stakeholders, with average values of 3.33 and 3.21, respectively. However, current utilization of these strategies is relatively low, with only 42.3% engaged in general operating support and 32.0% in capacity-building grants. This disparity indicates that stakeholders find value in flexible and sustainability-focused funding models, but may not be able to access them. Providing funding via these mechanisms may help organizations enhance organizational capacity and sustainability, suggesting a need for improved access to funding opportunities, better grant-writing skills, and stronger relationships with funders.

Funding Priority	Average Value	Pct. Currently Engaged in Strategy
General Operating Support	3.33	42.3%
Program Specific Grants	3.31	56.0%
Capacity-Building Grants	3.21	32.0%
Project Based Grants	3.02	55.6%
Seed Grants	2.70	12.0%
Research Grants	2.53	4.0%
Matching Grants	2.45	12.0%
Restricted Grants	2.41	28.0%
Challenge Grants	2.20	4.0%

**Goal Alignment Strategies.** The second survey also asked about mechanisms to align stakeholder and funder goals, and further, whether those mechanisms are currently being employed. In general, stakeholders tend to believe additional work is needed to align current practice with stakeholders’ perceptions of value. In general, stakeholders rated “identifying shared interests and objectives” highest among the strategies, and rated current practice far above other practices. Large gaps exist between value and current practice in mutual mission and vision alignment, clear communication. While these strategies are highly valued with average ratings of 3.28 and 3.26 respectively, stakeholders believe current practice can be improved significantly, denoted by gaps of -0.97 and -0.95. Joint strategic planning, despite being highly valued with a rating of 3.24, shows the largest gap of -1.24, indicating a severe misalignment. The ratings and gaps in current practice suggest the Strategy Table may improve coordination by pursuing mutual mission and vision alignment, improving communication practices, and participating in joining strategic planning.

Goal Alignment Strategy	Average Value	Rating of Current Practice	Gap
Identify Shared Interests and Objectives	3.37	2.60	-0.77
Mutual Mission and Vision Alignment	3.28	2.31	-0.97
Clear Communication	3.26	2.31	-0.95
Joint Strategic Planning	3.24	2.00	-1.24
MOU or Partnership Agreement	3.23	2.46	-0.77
Celebrate Achievements Together	3.19	2.46	-0.73
Regular Evaluation and Feedback	3.15	2.34	-0.81
Cross-Organizational Teams	3.12	2.28	-0.84
Flexibility and Adaptability	3.12	2.36	-0.76
Joint Resource Allocation	3.08	2.10	-0.98
Regular Joint Meetings	3.00	2.24	-0.76
Conflict Resolution Mechanisms	3.00	2.04	-0.96
Shared KPIs	2.92	1.96	-0.96

**Identifying and Addressing Gaps.** Stakeholders offered opinions on which strategies they find most valuable for using philanthropic funding to identify gaps and contribute to the Strategy Table’s goal. Unlike the other questions, stakeholders were not asked to rate current practice regarding identifying gaps. In general, respondents assigned the highest ratings to training and development needs analyses, continuous improvement monitoring, and strategic planning, with ratings of 3.20, 3.15, and 3.12 respectively. Many of the strategies received values less than 3.0, including conducting strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis (2.96), customer feedback and complaints (2.92), benchmarking (2.85), developing KPIs (2.81), and employee surveys and interviews (2.81), suggesting these methods are considered less effective. To better assist organizations in identifying and addressing gaps, the Strategy Table may want to solidify their support of highly valued strategies, including training needs analysis and continuous improvement monitoring, and strategic planning sessions.

Identifying Gaps Strategy	Average Value
Training and Development Needs Analysis	3.20
Continuous Improvement Monitoring	3.16
Strategic Planning Sessions	3.12
Stakeholder Feedback	3.00
Conduct SWOT Analysis	2.96
Customer Feedback and Complaints	2.92
Benchmarking	2.85
Developing KPIs	2.81
Employee Surveys and Interviews	2.81

**Building Capacity.** Finally, stakeholders gave feedback on the perceived value of several strategies to improve organizational capacity. In this domain, many of the strategies received ratings of 3.0 and greater, suggesting favorable perceptions of nearly all of the strategies. However, monitoring and evaluation, collaboration and partnerships, and adaptability and innovation, and training and professional development received the highest average value ratings ranging from 3.20 to 3.28. To help organizations build capacity, the Strategy Table could strategically create grants that require organizations to participate in monitoring and evaluation, create spaces for collaboration and partnerships, foster adaptability and innovation, and provide professional development. Other capacity-building domains like technology, leadership development, and learning cultures, may be possible within a broader framework that prioritizes the highest-rated strategies first.

Building Capacity Strategy	Average Value
Monitoring and Evaluation	3.28
Collaboration and Partnerships	3.25
Adaptability and Innovation	3.21
Training and Professional Development	3.20
Build a Competent Team	3.12
Assess Current Capacity	3.08
Strategic Planning	3.08
Technology and Infrastructure	3.08
Leadership Development	3.08
Build a Learning Culture	3.00
Volunteer Engagement	2.80

## Appendix E. Hyperlinks to Report Objectives

Reports will:

- [Identify how to better assist grantees and other partners with identifying and accessing opportunities for funding, including reducing internal and cross-foundation barriers](#)
- [Identify how to better assist grantees and other partners with identifying and accessing opportunities for funding, including reducing internal and cross-foundation barriers](#)
- [Identify how to better assist grantees and other partners with identifying and accessing opportunities for funding, including reducing internal and cross-foundation barriers](#)
- [Identify what capacity needs to be built to secure public funds](#)
- [Critique and invite feedback on the Strategy Table members' primary funding strategies and tactics related to each of the eight interventions, including alignment or misalignment with strategies and tactics important to Stakeholder representatives and any gaps](#)
- [Critique and invite feedback on the Strategy Table members' primary funding strategies and tactics related to each of the eight interventions, including alignment or misalignment with strategies and tactics important to Stakeholder representatives and any gaps](#)
- [Identify ways to improve how Strategy Table members work with and fund Tribes, Nations and Pueblos and their entities](#)
- [Provide feedback on how the Strategy Table defines the eight interventions](#)
- [Identify significant challenges and opportunities related to the goal and eight interventions](#)
- [Identify significant challenges and opportunities related to the goal and eight interventions](#)
- [Identify barriers with accessing philanthropic and public resources](#)
- [Identify strategic opportunities](#)
- [Identify ways to refine the Strategy Table's goals](#)
- [Recommend co-created coordinated philanthropic and public investment strategies to accomplish the Strategy Tables' goals](#)
- [Recommend co-created indicators and identify baseline data and targets to measure outcomes related to the implementation of the agreed-upon coordinated investment strategies](#)
- [Identify and describe existing and potential models for funders to have more meaningful partnerships with governmental entities and better leverage federal, tribal, state and local funding \(including ways to work toward common goals with each entity playing their best roles\).](#)
- Recommend how philanthropic funding can:
  - [Compliment, attract and increase access to public funds, including addressing gaps and being used as matching funds;](#)
  - [Build capacity for organizations to seek and secure federal, tribal, state and local funding; and,](#)
  - [Provide proof of concept, leading to larger public investments.](#)



**Student Success Happens One Meaningful Conversation at a Time**

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