Tribal Stakeholder Engagement Session

Northern NM Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table

November 29, 2023

Report on the Role of Funding in Creating Equitable Access to College and Careers for Native American Youth and Young Adults

Introduction

On November 29, 2023 the Northern New Mexico Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table ("Strategy Table") convened a full-day "Tribal stakeholders engagement session" at the Hyatt Tamaya Resort. Twenty-three people representing 14 of the 18 Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations in the region and 3 Native non-profit organizations participated in the session. The session was focused on three overarching questions:

1. What can be done to improve the approach being taken by the Strategy Table members so it better serves Tribes?
2. What can be done to make it easier for Tribes to get foundation, federal and state grants to help their youth and young adults succeed?
3. How can funders and Tribal entities work together better to support Native youth and young adults in accessing careers and college?

This report summarizes the insights and recommendations from the wide-ranging, facilitated discussion. As described in greater detail below, participants delved deeply into many aspects of the overarching questions. This included examining the appropriateness of the Strategy Table's goal statement, intervention definitions, target populations and age group definitions. Participants shared both opportunities and barriers they've encountered in seeking to access and support programs with public and private funding. They also provided valuable insight into how philanthropic funders can work better with Tribes, Nations, Pueblos, and their entities to align and allocate their funding to address the needs and priorities of Tribal nations.

Background and Context

The Northern New Mexico Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table ("Strategy Table") was formed in 2021. It's composed of representatives from the following twelve national, regional, and local funders:

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

The Carl and Marilynn Thoma Foundation and Groundworks New Mexico are former members. Thoma is currently prioritizing work in states other than New Mexico and Groundworks has moved into a supporting role as a non-funder.

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 middle school age through age 29 in Northern New Mexico. Northern New Mexico includes San Miguel County, Mora County, Taos County, Rio Arriba County, Santa Fe County, Los Alamos County, Sandoval County and the 18 Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations located in those counties.

To achieve greater impact for the population described above, the Strategy Table partners seek to better coordinate, align and leverage regional grantmaking and investments in and across the following 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
- Entrepreneurship training
- Access to financial tools

Toward this end, the Strategy Table is engaging in the following tactics:

- Completing mapping and analysis of 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 Northern NM Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table developed a long-term strategic initiative designed to make significant progress toward the planning required to begin to achieve its goal. This 3-year plan is designed to be implemented in three phases:

- Phase I: Analyze private and public funding trends in Northern NM aligned to the defined age groups and target populations for investments. This work was completed in July 2023.
- Phase II: Complement the fiscal mapping results with authentic input from the defined key stakeholder group (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 develop 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.

The following list defines the "Stakeholder Groups" for the purposes of this work:

- Tribes, Nations, Pueblos, and their entities;
- 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;
- Non-Tribal governments, including federal, state, county and local; and,
- Private sector, unions and chambers of commerce.

The fiscal mapping project completed by the Children's Funding Project (CFP) collected and analyzed data for three areas of emphasis. First, it collected key statistics related to the overall goal of the Strategy Table and eight interventions in the region (e.g. high school graduation rates, number and percentage of Opportunity Youth). With this information, CFP was able to present a narrative of the unique opportunities and challenges for youth in Northern New Mexico living in rural and Tribal communities.

A second area of analysis centered on the grants and investments made by each foundation who was participating in the project at the time and a small number of other funders. The investment data were categorized by the following variables: Amount of funding; date; grantee; primary county; primary Tribe, Nation, or Pueblo; age group; and both the primary and secondary intervention area targeted. The ultimate 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 description and comparison of the primary funding strategies, tactics, and key initiatives or projects of each Strategy Table member that are focused on each of the eight interventions as well as each Strategy Table member's geographic focus and limitations and relevant funding restrictions.

Third, CFP gathered and analyzed data about 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 thoroughly understand the fiscal mapping report's data, analysis, and recommendations. Phase II Stakeholder Engagement began with the Tribal Engagement and is planned to be completed and the final report submitted to the Strategy Table in June 2024.

Tribal Stakeholder Engagement Methodology and Method

In November, 2023, the Strategy Table began implementing a process for key stakeholder group engagement, beginning with tribal entities. The Strategy Table used grounded theory methodology to gather information from partners as collaborators so themes and recommendations (theories) would emerge from the lived experiences of the participants. The Tribal Engagement Session was designed to centralize lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, to empower participants to name racist injuries and their origins, and to elucidate how these play out in accessing private and public funding. This required a shift in the types of questions asked and methods used to

facilitate discussion amongst participants in a session. These shifts result in unveiling structural inequities and undermining a race-neutral ideology that works to maintain and protect white privilege that may function to deny equitable access of Tribal nations and Indigenous communities to public and private funding.

Additionally, though the Strategy Table has decided not to share the full fiscal mapping report publicly, it shared a slide deck with detailed charts, graphs and summaries of the fiscal mapping data, findings, and analysis with Tribal Engagement Session participants. Participants did not receive copies or take photos of the information from the report.

Then, Merry-Go-Round and World Cafe' discussion protocols were used so that every participant, regardless of role (e.g., a young adult or a member of Tribal government), could have equal "air time" for their perspectives to be shared. Participants were also provided with reflection packets that contained information about the Strategy Table and the purpose, intended outcomes, and guiding questions for the session activities for their reference through the session. Participants captured their comments as a group on chart paper. These comments were transcribed verbatim and then used for thematic analysis.

The welcome and introduction segment of the Engagement session also included the stakeholder critique of the Strategy Table's goal, intervention areas, and tactics. The guiding questions provided for participant reflection were included with materials for analysis in the participant reflection packet:

1. How would you change or improve the Strategy Table's goals?
2. What do you think of the Strategy Table's definitions for the eight interventions?
3. How would you change the definitions for the eight interventions to be more relevant to Tribes and Native youth?

The World Cafe' discussion protocol was chosen as the method to collect stakeholder input on the following guiding questions:

1. How can we make it easier for Tribes to get foundation, federal and state grants to help your youth and young adults succeed?
2. How can we work together better to support Native youth and young adults in accessing careers and college?

Participants were invited to express their perspectives on the key themes to highlight in the results and recommendations to Strategy Table members through "sticky dot" voting. In this activity, participants reviewed all the comments from the session and used sticky dots to vote on the comments that resonated as being most important in their personal opinions. The comments elevated in this activity were highlighted when the comments were transcribed. If the comment received more than one sticky dote "vote", the number of votes was noted at the end of the comment. Using this method, the elevated points maintained their recommended focus of importance.

Transcriptions of participant comments aligned to specific guiding questions were separately analyzed for emergent themes by two of the session facilitators. These facilitators did not discuss the results of the session prior to engaging in independent analysis of participant feedback. Using a double rater design helps to ensure reliability in the identification and description of themes. The third session facilitator then reviewed the independent analyses to determine and discuss areas of agreement and differences. A validity check is also

embedded in the design of this work. The report from the Engagement session will be provided to session participants for review and feedback. This feedback process creates a "conscience check" to ensure that participants were accurately heard and understood.

Thematic Analysis

Rethinking Cultural Responsiveness and "Youth of Color"

A substantial proportion of the feedback on the Strategy Table goal and intervention areas related to the definitions of some of the terminology used. On the highest order of abstraction, participants questioned the use of the phrase "culturally responsive". Cultural responsiveness is a complex and nuanced concept predicated on the possession of cultural competence. Cultural competence, in general, is defined as a person or organization's ability to understand, embrace - not tolerate, and authentically interact with individuals or groups of people whose cultural backgrounds vary from one's own. Cultural responsiveness is the practice of putting cultural competence into action - genuine interaction between organizations despite different cultural lenses.

Culturally responsive funding practices would be based on understanding and responding appropriately to different aspects of culture a group brings to the relationship with funders. A result of culturally responsive funding would be changes in processes for grant attainment, management, and reporting that better align with cultural priorities and practices of Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations to bolster inclusion and equity in the funding opportunities for Tribal programs. The question from Tribal stakeholders centered on the appropriateness of the use of this term in the domain of philanthropic funding.

A more accurate descriptor of "cultural responsiveness" may already be in place in the philosophy of Trust-Based Philanthropy (TBP) - funding practices that place individuals or communities in the center of efforts for outreach, recognition of successful programs, and decision-making around funding priorities and awards. Sometimes, TBP can be drastically community and grantee centered in that rather than programs catering to the desires of the donor, the orientation is radically shifted to align funding with the greatest needs as identified from within the community. The TBH orientation is a practice through which race, equity, and privilege become front and center conversation topics, and shifts narratives to more accurately illustrate how equity and justice in funding practices benefit everyone involved. Funding practices center equity - the sharing resources and power with people who have been oppressed.

On a smaller but related scale, participants requested alternative language for "youth of color". According to the American Psychological Association (APA), using the term "people of color" implies that all people of color face similar degrees of injustice and oppression. The acronym BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) is often preferred for use, as it recognizes that Black and Indigenous people are, in general, more severely impacted by systemic racism. The suggestion of the APA is to use specific terms when referring to racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Black, Latino, Hispanic, Pueblo of Laguna). If specificity is not possible, use BIPOC and not people/persons/communities of color.

The predominant comment related to the Strategy Table goal and intervention areas is that the language used effectively communicates the goal and interventions to achieve it. The following list presents constructive feedback from session participants:
- Define college more clearly to reflect that certifications and other education opportunities outside the traditional 4-year college.

- Elaborate on the pathways to be focus areas for development in the region to which funding may be aligned.
- Consider the inclusion of a traditionally underrepresented group of people, persons with learning differences (special education Individualized Education Plans or 504 transition plans), as a target population in need of support to gain equitable access to college and career.
- Consider including a focus on providing support beyond scholarships for college completion. Native American students often need more than financial support to find success in Western higher education.

Enhance funder cultural knowledge of Tribal communities

In critiquing the Strategy Table's funding strategies and priorities, session participants requested a focus on the development of cultural humility within funder organizations. This would avoid a potential pitfall in the development of cultural competence, which can sometimes lead to using stereotypes to understand people from particular cultures rather than recognizing and validating the heterogeneity within "culture" and results in maintaining a stance of "othering". The cultural humility perspective shifts from getting training to gather a fixed set of information to adopting an orientation to learning about others' cultures by centering one's own intersectionality and implicit biases in order to cultivate self-awareness and reflection to explore one's shortcomings in perceptions about others.

The on-going process of cultural humility requires curiosity in other people's experiences, a willingness to learn about cultural differences, and realistic and on-going self-appraisal. Perhaps most important, the development of cultural humility requires a sensitivity to systemic and structural power imbalances. Cultural humility takes the focus off the underrepresented people and communities and transfers it to the needed changes internal to people and organizations outside a community that are necessary for creating true equity and inclusion in funding. The primary orientation of cultural humility is that no one can rely on one's own knowledge, even if culturally competent, of the concerns of a community - one must consistently ask members of communities, then listen and learn.

> "Get to know a nation's own needs, not what you think they are. Ask questions and don't assume."
>
> "Each Nation is unique. Be identity affirming and confirming by learning about the unique aspects of each Nation in the region."
>
> "What is culturally responsive in one Nation may not be in another."
>
> "Funders force the 'cookie cutter' model in Indian Country."

Stakeholders also commented on some knowledge needed to be culturally competent about Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos in New Mexico and in general.
- The preference is to use the specific Tribal designation of an individual or community whenever possible (e.g., Taos Pueblo, Jicarilla Apache). If unsure of the specific designation, use the terms Indigenous, First American Peoples, or Native American).
- The elected or appointed leaders of most Tribal governments in New Mexico change every year or two, and this short government term can be challenging for the implementation of programs and projects.

Funders should understand these term limits and not underestimate the importance of engaging both Tribal leaders and Tribal program staff in funding initiatives.

● Understand the complexities of Native American life. For example, Tribal members who are active in their cultural traditions must do so in an environment in which they don't always get time off from their Western jobs to participate fully. A second example is that Tribal members must navigate three civic engagements: Tribal, State, and National.

Shift Mindsets: From Charity to Reparations

> "The grant process itself creates barriers for Native communities. Reparations should be foremost in the minds of the funders."

Participants pointed out that the endowments of many philanthropic organizations are derived from revenue generated from lands and resources stolen from Tribal nations and Indigenous peoples. The origins of Tribal 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. Tribal programs are already developed to be culturally relevant and responsive. They often incorporate culture and language into services designed to impact youth and young adult engagement in college and career.

This shift in mindset is essential to equity and originates from a cognitive framework that prioritizes racial and ethnocultural justice. Ethnocultural justice explicitly attends to the ways race and ethnicity have affected the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities for equitable participation, power, and influence in society at large. The goal of this orientation is to address the negative effects of injustice and challenge the existence and maintenance of racial and ethnic oppression.

Three subthemes emerged in the analysis that help elucidate these shifts: develop flexible funding models from a place of cultural humility, increase capabilities while deconstructing structural inequities in funding practices, and transform funding narratives to enhance the sovereignty of Tribal communities.

Develop place-based, flexible funding models

Current donor-centric funding requirements and restrictions would need to be relaxed or even eliminated in order to implement a reparative approach that supports the self-determination of programmatic priorities of Tribal nations. This theme of flexible funding as necessary to reparations was reiterated throughout the session. In addition, Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos need to be actively informed about the funding opportunities that exist for their programs. The information provided should include how the grants operate and the process to include engagement sessions with Tribal entities and Tribal governments to determine priority areas. Session participants noted that they face an ongoing challenge of having to fund programs piecemeal through accessing and juggling multiple grants.

> "Funders need to say, 'Here's the funding, what will you do with it?'"
>
> "Tribes need to say, 'Here is our program, figure out how to fund it. Not, here's the money for what funders want to fund."
>
> "Operate on a 'social work' model to connect programs to funds."
>
> We "should not have to accommodate programs to grant funding requirements."
>
> There "should be a meeting and a resource guide for funders to share grants that are available, their process, and hear about Tribal needs."
>
> "Tribes often don't know what funding opportunities exist."

The structure and processes of grant funding illustrate another source of structural inequity in funding programs. The table below presents the clear requests of stakeholders for the revision of a grant making and management process.

Easier, simplified applications	"If I could get rid of grants, I would. Make applying to grants easier." "Replace state and federal funding streams with easier to get and manage and report on funds from philanthropy - as in greater self-determination." "Private money would have to be easier to manage and replace public funding streams to compel Tribes to consider private funds." "Grants are not worth your time at the end of the day."
Longer grant cycles	"The life cycle of funding needs to be extended. Projects take time to create." "One year grants don't lend themselves to be operationalized."
Common application	Create conditions in which Tribes are not competing against each other for financial resources. "Can Nations have one portal for ease of gaining funding?" "Competitive grants disincentivize Tribes and organizations from sharing best practices, because they might lose out on funds.
Larger grant amounts	"Grants need to be bigger than $150,000 to make real programmatic change."
Sustainability	Assist Nations in understanding how to position programs for sustainability after short-term funding.

	Support the effective and strategic investment of internal community assets to generate more self-sustaining financial resources for Tribal entities replace dependence on federal and philanthropic grants. "If we get used to this funding, will programs end when it's gone, or will Tribes need to suck up expenses?"
Provide a pool of flexible funds	Fund salaries and general operations, funding to explicitly fill gaps in other funding streams or to provide emergency funds. Don't silo funding. Tribes take a multifaceted approach to programming and funding needs to be more flexible. Look for and fund work in the intersections where transformation is taking place.

Increase capability to develop grant proposals while dismantling linguistic imperialism

Several participants communicated the need to be trained and to have financial support to build capacity to learn the tools to express their program needs through the highly specialized, technical writing necessary for grant funding while, at the same time, questioning why such "code switching" is necessary to overcome barriers to accessing funding. While often unintentional, the expectation by funders that grant seekers write applications using a form of Standard English expected of highly educated professionals in the U.S. can be seen as an expression of "linguistic imperialism".

Linguistic imperialism is the imposition of a dominant cultural language on speakers of other languages. It is the natural result of over 175 years of U.S. colonization practices in New Mexico. Major impacts of linguistic imperialism exist in the realm of funding. Non-standard Indigenous linguistic styles may not be viewed as quality written expression unless the Indigenous person code-switches. This requirement to code switch represents a structural inequality. Without possession of the command of written Standard English, dependency on the dominant culture is maintained and access to prestige, power, and resources is denied. Indigenous communities are robbed of the ability to express their perspectives on issues using their ways of representing program visions, successes, and challenges. Funders should be conscious and intentional in their forms and practices to ensure that the expectation to code switch does not become an undue barrier for Tribal nations and Indigenous people seeking to access funding.

> "Teach communities how to articulate funds needed for their unique traditional career pathways that aren't western."
>
> "Capacity-building to write grants to *manipulate words* to express program needs."
>
> "Language, how we write our stories."
>
> "Using the dominant culture's language."
>
> "What type of language are we using?"

Transform narratives and work to enhance sovereignty

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, poverty guidelines are seen as biased and produce stigma. Also, the definition of low income penalizes program participants who work two jobs or more so they aren't technically at the poverty level. However, the necessity of working two jobs to make ends meet is ultimately not family sustaining. Session participants clearly expressed that funders should encourage a strengths-based approach to making funding decisions.

> "You get more money the worse you look."
>
> "It's a race to the bottom".
>
> "If we present we're doing well, funders don't think Tribes need help. We have to paint a picture of negativity, come from abject poverty, in order to get grants."
>
> "It is degrading to be labeled poor."

Funders have an opportunity to help shift narratives about Indigenous people and communities as a way to provide resources that make meaningful reparations for colonization and genocide. Narrative change is fueled by a clear vision of desired future conditions that are authored by Tribal nations and Indigenous people. Funders are in a unique position as advocates for Tribal stakeholders and the promotion of new narratives and procedures in grant funding. Session participants outlined several ways Strategy Table members and other funders can transform narratives and enhance sovereignty:

Fund Tribal research initiatives	Assist Tribes in determining their own research questions.
	Invest in Tribal research projects to determine their own evidence-based interventions.
	Elevate Nations' priorities and goals.
Fund pilot programs	Invest in pilot programs designed to meet the unique needs of specific Tribes.
Respect information and data sovereignty	Allow funding to be used for traditional knowledge, language, and culture without requiring sharing information with funders to be able to sustain these programs. Want funding to "enhance our way of life" not continue assimilation into the dominant culture.
	Fund the development of evaluation design and program-level assessments that are determined within Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos.
	Respect that a lot of information, from program design to data collected for evaluation purposes, is culturally sensitive. Revise grant application materials

	and reporting requirements to eliminate any feeling of obligation to reveal this type of information. No specific language around cultural practices should even be requested. Allow freedom for sources of data to be determined internally by the Tribe.
Revise performance measures	A potential solution to tying resources to deficit-based narratives would be for funders to allow performance goals for programs to be developed by Tribes not funders. Often, the measures required by funders make no sense and are culturally inappropriate. For example, Tribes in New Mexico do not practice sweat lodges, so don't ask how many sweat lodges were held. Or a lot of the focus of measures is on math and English proficiency and western academic success, which is defined by the dominant culture. Performance measures, especially in State grants, are numerous and difficult to manage. Sometimes the requirements are beyond where the organization is in its development and what it can offer. Don't penalize new programs, develop performance measures that are aligned to where a program is in its life cycle. Offer a large grant with a main focus that then has a streamlined progression of objectives to be met. The current funding situation is experienced as siloed Tribal entities piecing together separate grants with disparate objectives. The impact of this context is a feeling of chaos across programs rather than synthesis and collaboration.
Revise reporting requirements	Assist Tribes in determining their own reporting parameters. Match reporting requirements to the work being done by Tribes rather than the needs of the funder. Tribes determine timelines and benchmarks for the grant cycle.

Partner with Tribes to Strengthen Capacity to Optimize Grant Funding

Participants were clear in their perspectives that their communities need financial resources to support the development of capacity within their own Nations. Participants mentioned that Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos in New Mexico need more Tribal members who are trained to assume positions to deliver program services, and have the education and experience necessary to manage a complex budget derived from multiple and numerous funding sources. The current situation, hiring non-Native employees to fill positions or not having the positions filled at all, is less than ideal.

 Many Tribal programs currently do not have the financial capacity to create job positions for grant managers. Finally, funders should not assume that every Tribal government has the knowledge and systems to effectively coordinate across departments and with programs to implement grants effectively. Funders should be prepared to

support training efforts at the Tribal government level to manage grants with fiduciary responsibility and best employment practices.

Building human resources capacity

Session participants said that many Tribes 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 to participants.

They also described the need for in-house training sessions on how to manage particular grants across the Tribal departments responsible for the management of grant funds (e.g., human resources, Tribal Council, finance departments, etc.). These trainings should be designed to create conditions for cross-department collaboration to ensure the successful use of funding.

Tribes also need a pool of applicants available to hire for direct program service delivery. Tribes have sometimes been required to return funds because programs did not have the human resources to fulfill funding obligations. This need for available and trained human resources includes public school settings that serve Native American students. Funders should consider providing funding to hire temporary employees for the life cycles of grants so programs can be implemented with higher quality.

> "Applying for and managing federal and state funds is overwhelming to manage. You need people to write, manage the grant, and deliver services."
>
> "Capacity building is needed. Entities sent money back because they could not fulfill obligations of funding," because there are not qualified people available in their communities to hire to provide program services.

Building community capacity

Session participants also identified several opportunities to build community capacity to increase access to philanthropic and public funding. The following list elucidates the suggestions participants had for the Strategy Table:

- Tribal members sometimes need assistance understanding how their Tribal governments operate, their rights and responsibilities, and the services/programs to which they have access.
- In some situations, Tribal leadership and Tribal programs need to connect for mutual understanding and an attitude of learning from one another. Government officials can benefit from knowing about the programs and services offered by Tribal entities. Programs benefit from understanding how their program interacts with government structures, such as purchasing and contracting.
- 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 including college and career pathway development (the eight interventions) into these strategic plans.

- Lateral oppression and low pay for positions in Tribal governmental entities impact services in some Tribal nations. These issues can undermine the impact of programs.
- Supporting leadership development efforts within Tribal communities as career pathways is a priority, this work requires funding for training to ensure Tribal members can be successful in roles related to funding management and program implementation.

Invest in practices to support belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose in the lives of Tribal youth and young adults.

<u>Belonging and Meaning</u>

Participants also emphasized the importance of making investments to enhance Native youth and young adults' connections to their home communities. This relates to a sense of belonging which can be defined as the feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences. It is such a fundamental human need that its level of fulfillment impacts numerous mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, they recommended that funders provide grants that enable Native youth and young adults to prepare for relevant career pathways in their Tribal nations.

A corollary consideration is to support career pathways that prepare Native youth and young adults to replace the non-tribal members who are hired for important positions in Tribal government or as consultants. These pathways are crucial because Western career path education and training is often not aligned with Tribal cultures and community needs. Tribal nations need Tribal members who are educated in Western careers so they can be gainfully employed in their Nations. For example, they mentioned the importance of supporting educator career pathways programs to prepare teachers from Tribal communities so they match student demographics.

They also mentioned the importance of supporting Native youth with both experiencing the larger world outside their reservations and enabling them to come home and earn a family-sustaining wage. Economic opportunities with a respectful compensation and benefits package as well as career ladders are often difficult to find in Tribal nations. Tribes need to be able to provide opportunities to young people so they want to return home and are able to be economically independent if they do so. For example, funding could be provided for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) departments to develop career pathways in Tribal communities to do this important work. Participants requested that funding for youth to participate in on-going language and culture learning and traditional vocational training be elevated.

> "Invest in the student to come back to the community."
>
> Help youth answer the question, "What is my value to my community?"
>
> "Coming back to the communities doesn't match what was expected for salary or focus."
>
> "Careers are not at home. They (youth) don't want to leave; careers are not accessible."

In addition, there should be support for Native youth and young adults to learn their languages and cultures and pursue culturally-relevant roles and careers in their home communities to demonstrate that these roles and responsibilities are recognized as equally-important to the future of Tribal nations. Toward this end, traditional education initiatives should be funded equitably with Western education interventions. Caution must be exercised to not commodify traditional knowledge and careers by applying a Western extrinsic reward system to it. While monetary compensation for traditional knowledge is contrary to many culturally-specific practices, scholarships or stipends could be provided to support access to basic needs while receiving the appropriate education and training for specific careers and roles within their Tribes.

Participants also focused on the importance of defining success from the perspective of Native youth and young adults. Envisioning one's self as capable of achieving success is predicated on positive definitions of self. Humans are meaning-makers; and how one sees oneself impacts the meaning placed on one's own behaviors and motivations, those of others, and behavior interactions in social situations. These definitions of self can have negative consequences if they are self-deprecating in nature. Positive expectations lead to positive self-definitions. Participants called for investments in programs that help explore the meaning of success from the perspectives of Native youth and young adults, including the factors that will help them feel successful and how to attain their visions of success.

Well-being and Purpose

Well-being is the feeling people have when they feel they are supported and have the resources they need to move through life with confidence and assurance. People with well-being are free from generational trauma and have faith in their innate abilities and their support networks to navigate life's ups and downs. They strive for balance in their lives so they can meet multiple needs. And for many Native Americans, feelings of well-being are highly correlated with the sense of belonging that can come from participation in cultural and traditional practices.

Participant comments provided some concrete specifications as to what types of contexts and interventions may help create feelings of well-being for Native youth and young adults as they navigate life "on the reservation" and make the transition to participation in Western education and economic structures. These suggestions are summarized in the table below.

Support life transitions	● Encourage funding that requires better partnerships between Tribes and schools to support students in education settings off reservations. ● Provide explicit support for students who live off the reservation, particularly around how to handle racism and oppression. ● Fund programs that explicitly prepare students to participate in the economy upon adulthood. ● Invest in teaching life skills related to living off the reservation aligned to personal finance, including making investments, and practical skills, like how to get around a city.
Support conditions needed for Native youth to thrive	● Special Education students are vulnerable and deserve greater focus and prioritization for supports to experience well-being.

	● Invest in interventions to support Native youth to carry the expectations placed on them to get an education, bring their learning back to their Nations, and revitalize language and culture. ● The absence of generational trauma, the healing of it, is important to creating feelings of well-being. The following trauma-informed, therapeutic intervention focus areas were suggested by participants: Mental health support for college students, suicide prevention after leaving the reservation, and alcohol and substance use prevention. ● Whole families are struggling with mental health and financial issues. Invest in whole family supports and interventions.
Support workforce development in Tribal communities	● Invest in career pathways designed in Native Nations to train Indigenous employees to hold key positions in their home communities. ● Allow funding to support the development of professional skills and practices to gain entry to education and employment.
Supports outside scholarships for success in higher education	● Invest in programs offering support to navigate the education system. ● Invest in programs that assist youth and young adults through the entire financial aid process.

Additionally, participants highlighted specific interventions they desire to see encouraged by philanthropic and public funding to strengthen a sense of purpose among Native youth and young adults. Purpose can be defined as a self-organizing, ultimate life aim that informs a person's sense of direction in life and helps locate the information needed to achieve their goals. These goals, this sense of direction, originates in the desire to achieve something significant and of consequence through their life. Possessing a sense of purpose benefits identity formation to the extent that people who report possessing a strong sense of purpose are even perceived as more attractive by others.

Participants in this session centered their comments on the need for interventions that provide Native youth and young adults opportunities to explore careers, including for elementary-age students:

● Create experiences for Native young people to travel, visit colleges, and have other experiential career exploration opportunities to explore to find their passion.
● Invest heavily in work-based learning as experiential career exploration.
● Invest in exploring the careers in the trades, white collar positions, and being an entrepreneur.
● Invest in creating mentorship programs that place youth and young adults with Native American professionals and tradespeople.
● Encourage programs to offer opportunities for career exploration in which young people are thinking about what it means to "declare a major" early in their education journey.
● Invest in interventions that unveil the depth careers can have and the multiple pathways and positions within industries.
● Invest in programs that view post-secondary education outside of 4-year college or university as equally valuable pathways to achieve personal goals.

> Facilitate answering the question, "What does the world want for me?"
>
> "Finding purpose means exploring interests."

Secondary Themes

While these themes did not have a preponderance of comments related to them, the comments that were associated with them rated highly in the elevation of important points by participants during the concluding activity of the session.

Invest whole systems: Addressing systemic issues

- Alleviate the "everyday barriers", including equitable access to food, housing, transportation, child care, etc. Lack of access to these basic needs are barriers to college and career.
- Investing in systems supports may not be directly related to program outcomes and yet the return on investment has a larger scale, domino effect that supports change.
- Support for people "on the margin" does not currently exist. This participant's comment returns to the concern that those individuals not considered under the poverty level because they work two jobs or make "just enough" but not a family-sustaining wage are left behind by funding priorities.
- Invest in collective community support structures and wraparound services for program participants.

> "Basic needs need to be met earlier, these can limit participation."

Support the development inter-tribal collaboration efforts

- Invest in structures and processes to create and strengthen intertribal collaboration to share best practices, find creative ways to fund programs together, collaborate with other tribes to build a workforce and workforce pathways (deconstruct silos), and collaborate on initiatives and share resources to spend down funds when needed.

Investing in youth voice

- Youth do not feel heard by some of the leaders in their Tribal governments. Tribal governments need a different perspective informed by youth voices.
- Funders need to bring youth to the table and have conversations "with" them.
- Effort needs to be put into discovering how best to engage youth.
- Engage youth in Participatory Action Research in communities to determine research questions, gather data, protect data sovereignty, and influence funding decisions.

Conclusion

The input and recommendations shared by participants in the Tribal Engagement Session held on November 29, 2023 will be tremendously valuable as the Strategy Table develops coordinated investment strategies and measures and a collaborative framework for their efforts, as well as more meaningful partnerships with

governmental entities to better leverage public and philanthropic funding. Their input on the Strategy Table's goals, interventions, funding strategies and tactics will enable these to be adapted to better reflect the lived reality and priorities in Tribal nations and Indigenous communities. In particular, the unique opportunities, strengths and barriers they elevated will influence the Strategy Table members' individual and collective actions, moving forward.

LANL Foundation and the Northern NM Pathways to Opportunity Strategy Table is dedicated to non-extractive, participant-centered partnerships. Your participation in this process is highly appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments regarding this project:

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