We believe that conversations can change communities. That is why we invited Albuquerque Community Foundation (ACF) donors, community nonprofits and others into conversation about areas of biggest need: environment, economic development, education, homelessness and hunger, health and arts.

We convened eight meetings throughout Albuquerque with about 200 people in attendance. Themes which surfaced repeatedly included: a need for cooperation among agencies, increased education opportunities, strong support for community-based services and the need for more conversations. Here is what we heard thus far.

Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration.
- The word used most frequently used.
- To see groups work together to tackle major issues so donors know they are “moving the needle.”
- Organizations recognize they have a lot to learn from each other and a lot to offer.
  “It is frustrating when we have so many organizations doing the same thing but they don’t work together. We want to share and collaborate and figure out how to do things better and smarter, instead of just making waves in the water.”

Get to the root.
- Building stronger safe neighborhoods.
- Tackle systemic problems while addressing immediate needs.
- Most are interested in a holistic approach and increasing collaboration by including organizations that would not traditionally work together.

Kids are the key.
- Early childhood intervention is a vital focus area to create a healthy community.
- Reducing hunger, homelessness, and attracting economic development is a key to building stronger safe neighborhoods.
- Ensure that all children have access to food, health centers, art and music, early and continuous education.

It takes a village.
- Initiatives require public-private-nonprofit partnership to accomplish goals.
- Reliance solely on donors or government programs to deal with the effects and root causes of poverty, hunger, and lack of opportunity for economic and cultural well-being is not feasible.
- Schools are a possible partner in community improvement, an ally for community gardens (which incorporates education, hunger, nutrition, environment and health) and community health centers.

So, how can we help?
- More discussion with other players – including city and county agencies – at the table.
- ACF is an organization with a bank of good will and the voice which can be heard above the din.
- Continue to host convenings. “I leave with good ideas and new contacts.”

Conclusions
- The Foundation is in the process of digesting the information and planning the next steps.
- There are exciting opportunities ahead to engage our donors and nonprofit partners in more innovative ways.
- We have a chance to be more effective than ever.

We look forward to more conversations and to bringing more agencies together.
**Target Group Meeting Results**

**ACF Donors**
- Deal with root causes to systemic issues (crime, mental health, hunger and homelessness, education, etc.). Find a holistic approach which addresses multiple issues.
- Concern that many organizations do similar work without working together. There is a perception of an environment of competitiveness instead of collaboration and they feel their dollars will stretch farther when organizations work together.
- Together with ACF, donors see themselves as having the ability to ask non-profits to come together.
- Donors would like to know if donations are making a dent in major issues.
- Donors have more to offer than their checks alone: expertise, resources and connections.
- Want to see more good news make headlines.
- Donors have more to offer than their checks alone: expertise, resources and connections.
- Want to see more good news make headlines.
- In this city, its people and in the Foundation’s ability to make a real difference.

**Hunger and Homelessness**
- The amount of time people spend in and out of emergency shelters can be years; assistance in obtaining permanent housing solutions can also be years.
- There are over 200 food programs (food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, etc.) in our community.
- Chronic homelessness is seeing a significant decline due to work the city and nonprofits are doing. However, near-homelessness and food insecurity continues to rise.
- Behavioral and mental health is a major concern for all agencies, public and private.

**Healthcare**
- What is a 'real' number for people who are homeless/hungry?
- Collaborations that address additional challenges for a homeless individual/family: childcare to attend a job interview, clean clothes, food and temporary housing.
- Talk to clients. What they tell you they need is often different than what the nonprofits say they need.

**Ideas**
- Collaboration and conversation between government and philanthropy. Bring legislators, city council and county commissioners to the table.

**Economic Development**
- Jobs = nonprofit funding.
- Jobs reduce poverty.
- Collaboration is essential for businesses and nonprofit organizations across all sectors. A push toward economic development is essential so nonprofit funding will not dry up.
- Albuquerque is a great place to open a business. There is lack of awareness about programs and opportunities available to business owners.
- Economic development had become a bright spot for the city. Many are addressing it.
- Economic mobility across all sectors must take the place of assistance.
- Better educational opportunities lead to employment.
- Poverty is a major hurdle because people do not imagine themselves having better lives or doing something different. Reaching into these communities to give support is essential.

**Schools**
- Early childhood education dominated the conversation.
- Engage whole communities for student and school success.
- 1 out of 4 kids experience poverty.

**Environment**
- Students must unplug and learn.
- Improving collaboration is key to create a continuum of learning and engagement for pre-schoolers through adults.
- A major hurdle for non-profits and agencies focused on the environment is communication about services and opportunities available.
- Educate all on rainwater collection, water conservation, gardening for a better tomorrow.

**Arts**
- Arts are not a luxury but a precursor and necessity for economic development. Arts organizations are not separate from other areas of interest; not only do arts and culture help drive the economy but these areas are also greatly affected when the economy suffers.
- Arts and economic development are intrinsically linked. “Re-think the outdated and indifferent brand for Albuquerque that suggests we live in Santa Fe’s shadow instead of clearly expressing and valuing Albuquerque’s very different and desirable assets.”
- Arts and culture careers continue to rise in Albuquerque but these occupations tend to be lower paying.
- A Vibrant Art Scene = quality of life = people wanting to live and raise a family here.
- Art audiences are aging.

**Ideas**
- 1) Convenings on grant requests the ACF reviews.
- 2) Convenings to educate and inform about volunteer opportunities and how donors can participate beyond giving.

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**EDUCATION**
- Early childhood education dominated the conversation.
- Engage whole communities for student and school success.
- 1 out of 4 kids experience poverty.
- National Conference on Incarceration: “If a child can’t read by 3rd grade, build their prison bed.”
- Intervention: education for families – GEDs for adults for programs that include parental involvement.
- Cross-sector partnerships between schools and nonprofits, from arts to environmental to provide new opportunities for students.
- STEAM not STEM.
- Kids don’t imagine themselves doing things they have never experienced.

**Ideas**
- 1) Collaboration needed because every stage matters: summer after school programs, transportation for field trips and afterschool programs on-site.
- 2) Facilitate and coordinate more discussions that involve children and families to discern what they want and need.

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**Ideas**
- 1) To allow Albuquerquians to make art a career, it is imperative that organizations work together.
- 2) Increase access to art with bus tours/crawls/events, holding online workshops, and taking advantage of technology for schools and populations where access is a problem.
Two Featured ACF Collaborations

**BEMP–Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program at Bosque School**

This collaborative program joins the UNM Biology Department (student interns, lab work and data quality control) and 16 schools (public, traditional, alternative, charter, private, parochial and home schools) along the middle Rio Grande valley. Each actively monitors the bosque on a monthly basis gathering abiotic and biotic data which reveals the health and ecology of the bosque. A grant from the Foundation, in 2014, provided bus transportation for students to eleven BEMP sites. Teachers and students learn about environmental science in an outdoor lab. Participating BEMP students and teachers have received local, state and national recognition and awards for their BEMP science, community service outreach and educational activities.

**Running Start for Careers**

Running Start for Careers is a collaborative effort between out-of-state funders, the City of Albuquerque, local business and the Albuquerque Community Foundation. Running Start has created curricula aimed at keeping students at-risk for dropping out in school. High-school juniors and seniors take dual-credit classes which are designed lead them straight into a career after graduation.

One of the curricula is the Financial Services Career Exploration course, designed by Nusenda Credit Union, which prepares students for a career in the financial services industry. Additionally, the course teaches personal finance, academic and life skills. A second of the eleven curricula is Construction 101 introducing students to a wide variety of options available within the industry. Students get hands-on learning time with tools, blueprints and materials while learning how to be a member of a construction team.

Looking Forward

- Convene the conveners. Compare findings.
- Convene funders who support collaborative Grantmaking.
- Convene: Collaborations - What's all the talk about?
- Progress reports
- Community Engagement:
  - Create spaces for Collaboratories
  - STEAM vs. STEM
  - Student Field Trips across sectors
  - Food-Farm entrepreneurs
  - Hunger - lack of food vs. lack of information
  - Economic Development to reduce poverty
  - Social Media
  - Growing a nonprofit endowment
  - Successful collaboration reports
  - Communicate - Media Desk