

2015-2016 Evaluation Plan for

LA RED DEL RIO ABAJO

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BACKGROUND

La Red del Rio Abajo is a collaboration of ten non-profit organizations that have agreed to work together to “promote safe, healthy and economically secure families and communities” (La Red, 2015a; p.1) in Albuquerque’s South Valley, an integral, yet unincorporated area of Albuquerque. Although heavily populated, the area retains a rural atmosphere: some homes are situated on large lots and it is common for South Valley neighbors to keep chickens and goats. Rio Abajo (lower river) is the name given to the area by early Spanish settlers, and many South Valley residents trace their ancestry to those settlers. Over the past several decades, the area has increasingly attracted immigrants from Mexico.

Initiated in May 2014, La Red members have been exploring the possibility of undertaking meaningful social action through collaboration, inspired by the achievements of the collective impact movement. The group has focused on building trust by pursuing joint projects. Several La Red members developed and implemented a leadership program for Hispanic and Latino young men. La Red hosted a series of community forums, in which community members shared their ideas with political representatives. Recently, the group received funding from the McCune Foundation to host a series of “Resolanas,” community conversations that will advance the ideas of South Valley residents, and help illuminate community needs that would benefit from a collective impact approach.

The collective impact movement arose from the observation that individual initiatives to resolve complex social and environmental problems have made little headway. Collective impact offers a different approach to solving such multifactorial and systemic problems, and is increasingly calling the attention of NGO’s in a number of countries, including Australia, Canada and the United States. Collective impact takes place when organizations with similar and compatible interests, but with different capabilities, share a common perception of the nature of a problem. They collectively implement agreed initiatives towards the solution of the problem. Participating organizations share knowledge and information with a common measurement system. They also practice effective communication among the members that is a paramount condition to a successful achievement of goals. A backbone organization is required to coordinate

strategies, activities and reflections oriented towards the solution of the problem in discussion (FSG 2014).

LA RED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

The ten organizations of La Red currently operate in the South Valley area. They are: Centro Savila, Encuentro, Enlace Comunitario, La Cosecha, the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, Partnership for Community Action, PB&J Family Services, Prosperity Works, Rio Grande Community Development Corporation, and Valle Encantado.

Centro Savila is an organization that focuses on mental and behavioral health, and access to health services for youth and pregnant women through helping with their applications for Medicaid and even helping pay medical expenses. The Centro also works with recovery plans for clients with a history of substance abuse. Another important service is to facilitate the access to healthy food from La Cosecha, described below.

La Cosecha is a community supported agriculture initiative that delivers fresh local produce to over 300 members every week during the growing season. Approximately half of the members are subsidized, an opportunity made possible by private donations and partnerships with South Valley Health clinics and community based organizations.

The collaboration between La Cosecha and Centro Sávila is a good example of how community organizations can increase their impact by working together.

Enlace Comunitario strives to eliminate domestic violence in Albuquerque's immigrant community by providing intervention services for families experiencing domestic violence, and by training women, youth and men to present domestic violence prevention workshops in the community.

Encuentro operates community participation, social justice and economic development initiatives for Latino immigrants, such as family engagement, legal services and citizenship, resources and referrals, adult education, and skills development focusing in small businesses and self-employment.

The New Mexico Immigrant Law Center provides high quality law services to low-income immigrant families facing separation due to deportation, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied minors.

Partnership for Community Action (PCA) supports community members to become leaders who can develop and advocate for solutions to community challenges. PCA currently has initiatives in education, health and economic development. The organization is celebrating its 25th year.

PB&J Family Services has been serving the poorest families in Albuquerque since 1972. PB&J delivers services to at-risk children and their parents in a variety of settings, including therapeutic pre-school classrooms, home visiting and correctional facilities (when parents are incarcerated). Programs focus on nurturing a healthy parent-child bond in order to promote optimal childhood development and to prevent child maltreatment.

Prosperity Works facilitates financial capability and coaching; offers Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and Child Savings Accounts, and strategies to help families move into the middle class.

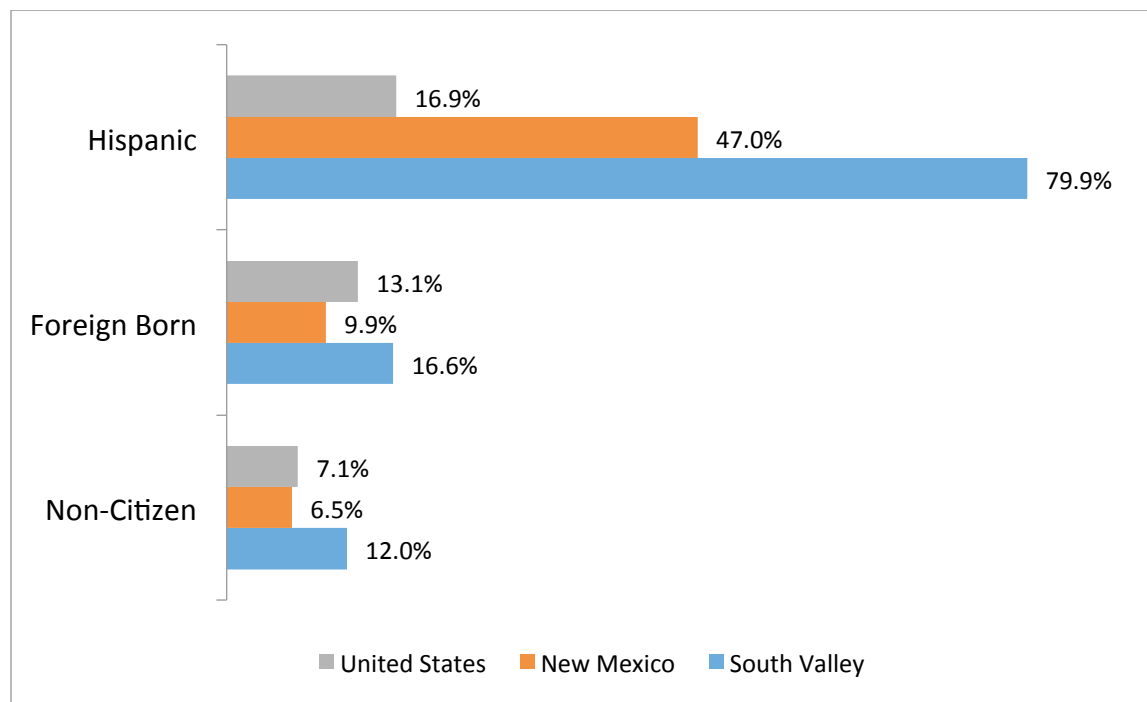
Rio Grande Community Development Corporation (RGCDC) works in community action and development through the creation and improvement of infrastructure for enhancing economic development, education, community health, and land use issues. The reduction of poverty and the preservation of traditions and culture are points of interest for RGCDC.

Valle Encantado promotes sustainable economic development in the South Valley. Projects have included home weatherization and agricultural development.

ALBUQUERQUE'S SOUTH VALLEY

The majority of the South Valley's residents—80%—identify as Hispanic. Among the Hispanic population, two-thirds identifies as Mexican, and one-third identifies as “other” Hispanic. About one in six South Valley residents is foreign born, and about one in eight is not a citizen. For comparison, 17% of US residents identify as Hispanic, one in 7.5 is foreign born and one in 14 is not a citizen. (See figure 1). More than half of South Valley residents report speaking a language other than English at home (presumably Spanish). Nationally the percent who report speaking a non-English language at home is only 21%.

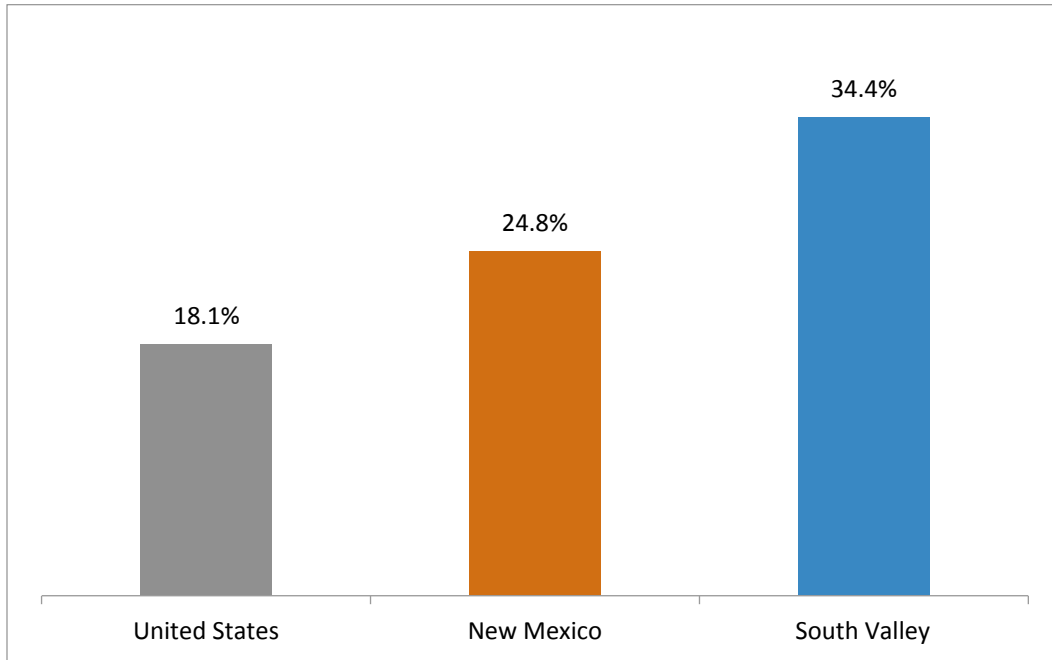
Figure 1. Hispanic origin, immigrant and citizenship status for residents of the US, New Mexico and South Valley



Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, accessed through the American Factfinder <factfinder.census.gov>.

South Valley families experience poverty at rates substantially higher than the state and national rates. (See figure 2.)

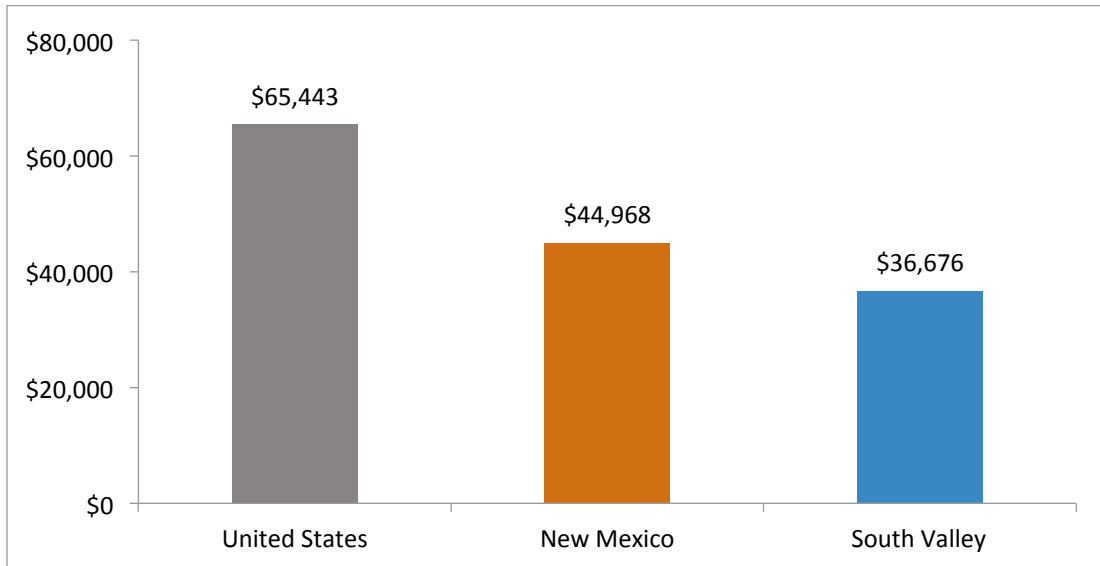
Figure 2. The percent of families with children under the age of 18 in poverty in the US, New Mexico and South Valley



Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, accessed through the American Factfinder <factfinder.census.gov>.

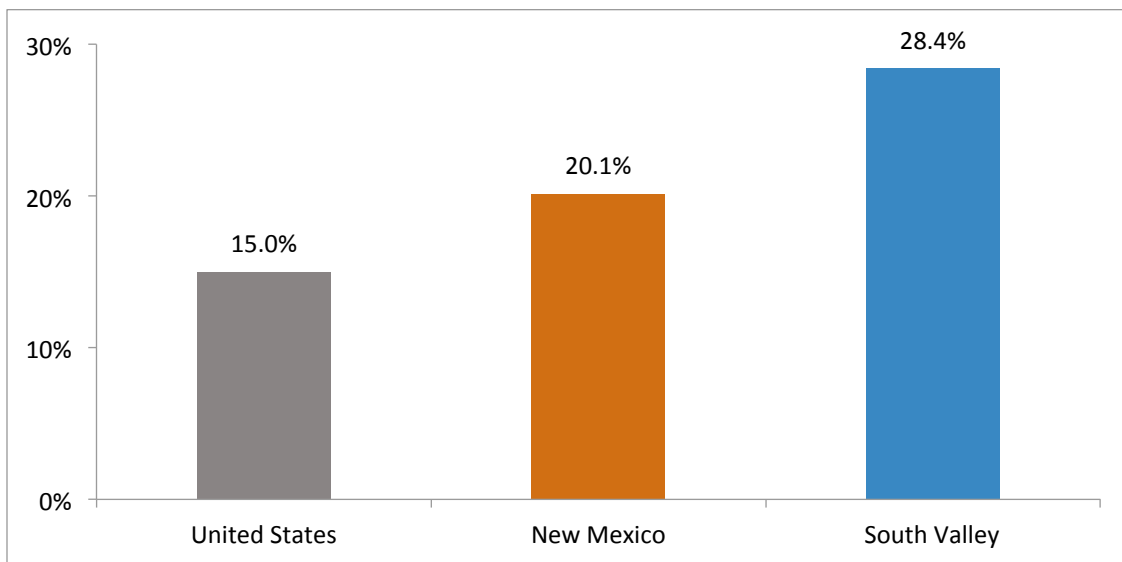
Consistent with these poverty rates, income and educational attainment in the South Valley also fall below national and state averages. Median household income in the South Valley, at \$36,676 is almost \$30,000 less than median income nationally. And the percent of 18-24 year-old South Valley residents who do not hold a high school diploma or credential, at 28%, is almost double the national rate. (See figures 3 and 4.)

Figure 3. Household median income in the United States, New Mexico and South Valley



Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, accessed through the American Factfinder <factfinder.census.gov>.

Figure 4. Percent of youth 18-24 years old without a high school diploma or credential in the United States, New Mexico and South Valley



COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND EVALUATION

An important element of collective impact is to create a long term learning culture in the participating organizations. Evaluation doesn't necessarily need to happen at the end of the intervention nor must it be solely external. Evaluation is a process that should be

embedded in the every day life of an organization (FSG 2014), and every member should feel that their voice is heard and included through a fair and clear mechanism of participation and decision making process. This approach helps develop trust and ease the exchange of information and feedback. The spirit of Collective Impact is the collaboration among members, however, the literature mostly describes external instigations of collective impact, and typically not much of a natural collaboration amongst organizations (Gamble 2010).

Building capacity within the participating organizations is another objective of CI evaluation approach, as CI itself is not a solution but a process that takes openness to embrace new understandings and contexts. Members should develop the knowledge and skill to evolve in the process and to be sensitive to the changes and further impacts that hopefully will occur in behaviors and in the socio-political and economic context (FSG 2014).

The literature describes three stages of evolution of CI evaluation. First, developmental evaluation is appropriate for the early stages where the organizations are in the process of understanding the context of the issue, the causes and effects of the problem. At this stage, members are trying to define the problem and the strategies and initiatives that might resolve lead to its resolution.

As the members of the collective start to implement initiatives, a formative evaluation that assesses effectiveness and efficiency becomes most helpful. Intermediate outcomes need to be measured and possible corrections have to be introduced to align with the original expected results. Some behavioral changes might be evident at the beneficiaries' level as well as systemic changes in funding flows, cultural norms and public policy in the outer context (FSG 2014).

The final or summative evaluation starts at an advanced stage of the initiative, and it is feasible when processes are already well established and there is more certainty in the expected results (FSG 2014). The summative evaluation assesses the extent to which the initiative has achieved its goals. (See figure 5.)

Figure 5. Activities associated with three types of evaluation; the appropriate evaluation depends on the maturity of the collective impact initiative.

Developmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community needs – Services offered by the public agencies – Services offered by participating NGO’s – Gaps in the current services offered • Assess readiness for collective impact 	Formative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the five conditions for effective collective impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shared vision – Reinforcing activities – Shared measuring system – Continuous communication – Effective backbone organization • Construct indicators of impact • Validate the logic model • Assess intermediate results: changes in awareness, engagement, attitudes, behaviors, and skills 	Final or summative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling for generalization • Measuring the impact on society
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EVALUATION PLAN

Appropriate to the early stage of the collective impact process, we suggest a developmental evaluation. Specifically, we will address the first five elements of the developmental evaluation stage in figure 5, and intend to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. What are the characteristics and needs of the community?
2. Are there gaps in public services that address these needs? When we talk about the gaps in the services we also mean the failures in the way those services are offered. For example it is problematic if existing services are not offered by Spanish speaking providers.
3. How and to what extent do La Red member organizations fill these gaps?

Proposed activities:

1. Compile data on demographic, social, economic, health and safety characteristics of the South Valley from official sources, including the US Census, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), NM CDC, and IBIS. Include measures of both strengths and challenges. (One strength of rural communities in New Mexico, for example, is multi-generational families.)

2. Observe Resolanas held in the spring, to document community input on needs.
3. Compile information on services provided and number served by each La Red organization through review of websites and follow up inquiries to directors by email or phone.
4. Compile information on public services and Spanish language health care providers available to South Valley residents.

FUTURE EVALUATION

We expect that future evaluation activities will explore the other aspects of the developmental evaluation, and eventually move into the formative phase. We also expect that our intervention will help transmit the real value of the evaluation process so this can become a part of the organizational culture.

TIMEFRAME

- We will have a description of the community needs from the official sources by February 15, 2016.
- The inventory of services both from the government agencies and NGO's will be ready by February 28, 2016.
- We will observe two Resolanas events by the first week of March 2016.
- The first draft will be ready to discuss with relevant stakeholders by March 15th, 2016.
- The final report will be ready to present and discuss with relevant stakeholders by April 15, 2016.

REFERENCES

FSG, 2014, Guide to evaluating collective impact. Collective impact forum. Available at: <http://www.fsg.org/publications/guide-evaluating-collective-impact>

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