



COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

ECONOMIC RECOVERY BRIEF



418 Main Street
Clovis, NM 88101

(575) 762-7714



epcog.org



admin@epcog.org



Community Conversations

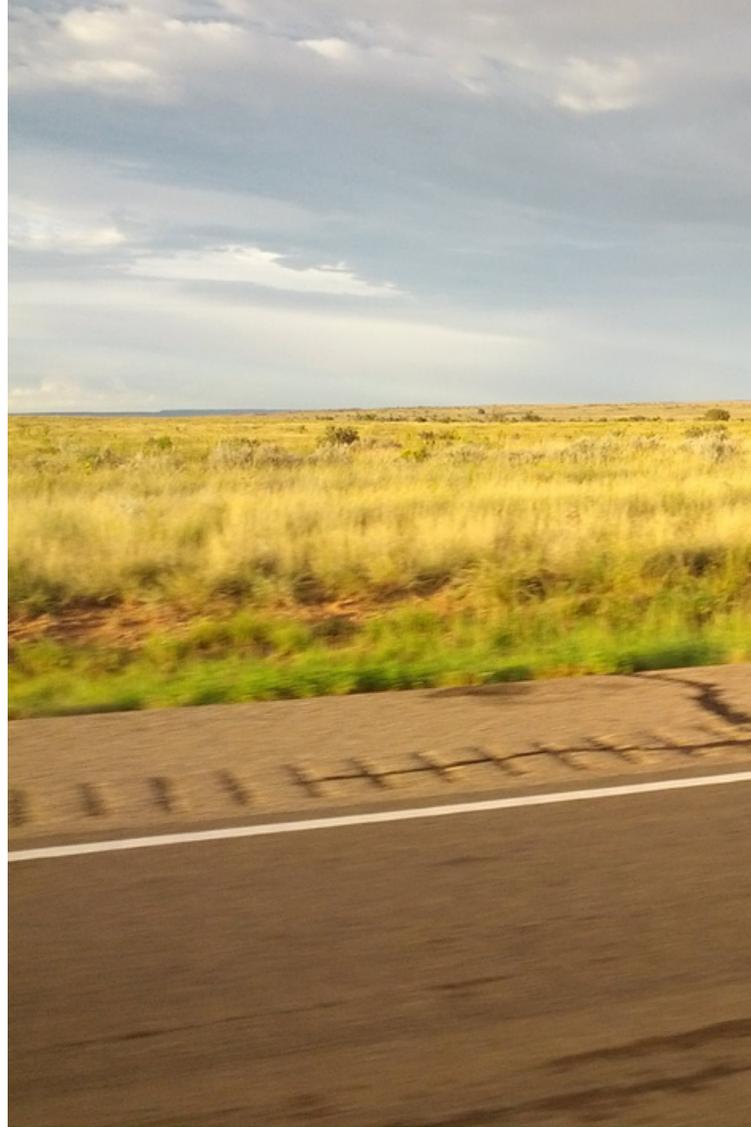
The Approach

A community-driven approach to developing an economic recovery was established to maximize participation, develop local community ownership of the economic recovery plan, increase responsiveness to communities, and enhance project relevancy with local stakeholders.

The protocol developed included community conversations and interviews, collection and aggregation of relevant data points, testing of developed theories, and will ultimately result in economic recovery recommendations that will need to be adjusted and recalibrated based on community feedback.

During the month of November local government officials and other community stakeholders were interviewed to understand the economic situations of the differing locales within the Eastern Plains Council of Governments. The locations ranged from the small population of 103 individuals in Grady to the much larger concentration of people with nearly 39,000 in Clovis.

Interviews were conducted concerning various aspects of economic hardships, economic strengths, and economic opportunities. Conversations were framed through the COVID-19 pandemic lens. The conversations were structured in order to gather information about economic development before the pandemic began, the reality of how it has been during, and what their hopes and goals are for after this situation has moved into the past. Each location had different realities for each of these times, but there were common themes that were established throughout the conversations.



Participating Entities Include:

City of Clovis

Clovis Economic
Development

Curry County

De Baca County

Greater Tucumcari
Economic Development

Village of Grady

Harding County

The Interviews

The interview script developed for both local government interviews, as well as with community stakeholder interview focused on three distinct categories: Pre-Coronavirus Pandemic Economic Trends, Coronavirus Era Economic Trends, and Post-Coronavirus Economic Recovery Goals.

Outcomes and Themes

Many communities discussed similar economic and community issues that existed prior to the pandemic. Those issues included: economic leakage outside of the local community, lack of retail/grocery options in the local community, competition with nearby communities/states, and lack of available workforce. Other issues highlighted by interviews were the lack of infrastructure and concerns about improving the quality of life.

When discussing the effect of the pandemic on their local economy, many communities stated that the immediate effect was actually positive because the "stay-at-home orders" actually decreased economic leakage outside of the local community for a brief period of time. However, we noticed that many of the negatives the communities were citing as a result of the pandemic, may not have actually been pandemic related.

The interviewer then asked each stakeholder group the following question to clarify: "Did the pandemic create new obstacles or did it just magnify existing ones?" What became clear was that while there were some new challenges introduced by the current situation, the

biggest impact was the magnification and exacerbation of already existing issues. For example, the temporary enhancement of unemployment benefits posed a staffing challenge for businesses. At the beginning of the pandemic there was a decrease in leakage of revenue as most of the country was under strict lockdown. However, as restrictions eased communities bordering Texas, leakage increased. Businesses that had been slow to adapt and provide e-commerce options, were forced to adjust at a faster rate than prior to the pandemic in order to stay in business.

Even after the COVID-19 pandemic dissipates it is apparent that many of these struggles will remain and must be addressed. It is important for the improvement of their economic situation and for some of the smallest communities their continued existence is at risk. Recovery efforts should not only focus on just returning to business to pre-pandemic conditions, but should should focus on building resiliency and growth.

Key Takeaway

The global pandemic created new short-term obstacles as a result of public health orders, but mid- and long-term challenges to economic development (i.e. workforce) that pre-dated the pandemic were magnified and accelerated by the global pandemic.