



NEW  
MEXICO  
NARRATIVE  
PROJECT

## Preface

The New Mexico Narrative Project set out to find ways for progressives to connect more deeply with New Mexicans and communicate their vision and agenda in more authentic language that resonates, excites, and persuades.

Our efforts began where this handbook does, and where our team always recommends progressives start: where New Mexicans live. **Mapping the New Mexico Mindset** outlines the dominant emotions and feelings, aspirations, pain points, and personal values of New Mexicans today. By understanding how average New Mexicans feel and think, we can better understand what policies can help them, identify tripwires and blindspots, and craft messaging that pulls the right levers and presses the right buttons.

The next section, **The New Mexico Narrative** presents the progressive values that best align with New Mexicans' values, and best support a progressive agenda: family and community, fairness, opportunity, and respect. This section has examples of language that bring these values to life, and show how opponents of a progressive agenda "violate" these values. This guide also lays out a **Master Message** – a progressive vision of how values can guide government, leadership, the economy, and the rules of society in general.

This exact message should not necessarily be used in every specific issue area or situation that different readers face in their work. The values identified can and should be used consistently across a wide range of issues, but will of course apply to different situations in different ratios. The proof points and detail used to animate those values will certainly vary by topic area and situation.

The Narrative is as much a method as it is a thing. The chapter **7 Rules** provides a way to apply the lessons of the Narrative to other issues, including ones other than those that our research and analysis covered. These rules ensure messaging resonates deeply with New Mexicans and remains deeply rooted in their values and the progressive vision. **Bringing It All Together** applies these rules in four examples: the Economy, Government, Education, and Poverty. Keep in mind, the Narrative is not an issue-specific messaging brief, but rather a document that gives you the tools and guidelines to apply to your own issues.

This book contains a lot of information – culled from over 73 deep-dive journals, two large-scale quantitative efforts, and the collective effort and institutional knowledge of a large and diverse steering committee. The **Tear Sheets** at the end are intended to make it easier to process and use in everyday efforts and our team encourages you to tear them out for handy reference.

A note from the contributors to this handbook:







*We are very thankful to everyone that has dedicated their time and efforts into making the New Mexico Narrative Project a reality, but this effort could not have been accomplished without the leadership, guidance, and dedication of the Center for Civic Policy and America Votes New Mexico.*

© 2017

*All rights reserved. This material may be used only for charitable or educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Use for commercial or political purposes is strictly prohibited. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. For permission information and authorization to photocopy items for permitted use, please contact Oriana Sandoval at the Center for Civic Policy <orsandoval.ccp@gmail.com>, or Miguel Avitia at America Votes <mativia@americavotes.org>.*



## Table of Contents and Icon Legend

	<b>1. Preface</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>2. Mapping the New Mexico Mindset</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Emotions and feelings</li><li>b. Personal values</li><li>c. Pain points</li><li>d. Aspirations</li></ul>	<b>3</b>
	<b>3. The New Mexico Narrative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The heroes and villains</li><li>b. Four value pillars</li><li>c. Master message</li></ul>	<b>12</b>
	<b>4. Using the New Mexico Narrative: 7 Rules</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>5. Bringing It All Together: The Narrative in Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The economy</li><li>b. Government</li><li>c. Education</li><li>d. Poverty</li></ul>	<b>21</b>
	<b>6. Portraits of New Mexicans</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>7. Tear Sheets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The Narrative</li><li>b. 7 Rules</li><li>c. Mindset Map</li><li>d. Value Pillars</li><li>e. Language Do's and Don'ts</li></ul>	<b>34</b>



*Items formatted like this are verbatim quotes from online journals conducted with 73 voters, with representation across demographics, including ideology and race/ethnicity. They may have been very lightly edited, only for clarity's sake.*



*Items formatted like this come from poll tested language. They are almost always inspired from those verbatim quotes.*

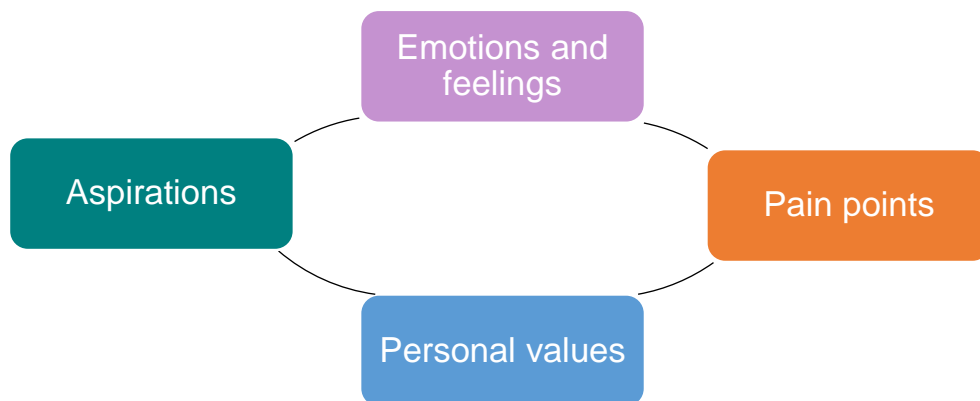
## Mapping the Mindset

The Narrative Project starts with listening. Our team kicked off with a deep-dive qualitative effort that listened as New Mexicans talked about their lives – in an online setting that encourages candor, in the privacy of their own homes and on their own time, and through provocative, open-ended questioning. They told us about how they feel when they wake up in the morning, their day, their family, their goals, the barriers to those goals, their past and future, and the past and future of the state.

Over the course of several months of research, the team mapped out the mindset of New Mexicans. The people of New Mexico have a unique set of experiences that shape how they view and live their lives. While not every aspect of this mindset is unique to New Mexico, the dimensions of each one and the combination set New Mexicans apart.

These elements don't, and shouldn't, always translate directly into messaging. Instead, their primary function is to help advocates better understand how to meet New Mexicans where they live. This, in turn, should help shape policy portfolios that address their needs, and communicate in ways that make people feel well-represented by their leaders. When we don't do this, voters feel like leaders and organizations care more about their own priorities than the priorities – and the problems – of those they claim to serve.

Our team has divided the New Mexico mindset into four key parts:



### Emotions and Feelings

When someone is panicking, a hyper-rational argument won't land. If someone is brimming with confidence, a naysayer's gloomy predictions will likely go ignored. In the same way, when progressives misread or fail to acknowledge the emotional makeup of the public, our messaging has little chance of connecting. In that spirit, New Mexicans today feel:

#### ❖ Anxious

Anxiety dominates the mindset for most New Mexicans. Finances are the greatest cause of that anxiety and a constant stressor. And it's little wonder:

- 1-in-3 New Mexican registered voters report they don't have the ability to pay their bills and expenses each month
- More than half don't feel they could deal with an emergency or unexpected expense, like a broken-down car or home repair
- 2-in-3 have burdensome debt – and most of them feel they'll never get free of it

Health care costs are also a significant source of stress for many, as are the often-unseen costs of providing care to another person, as many New Mexicans do.

Though not as widespread as financial anxiety, safety concerns are also significant – especially in Albuquerque and Hispanic communities, though these concerns surface across the state. Gangs, gun violence, homelessness, drunk drivers, and police shortages all contribute to this.

#### ❖ Ignored

New Mexicans across the state feel ignored on a number of fronts. The most common is not particularly unique to the state: the sense that those in the middle are left out and left behind, while the wealthy enjoy loopholes and incentives and low-income New Mexicans receive all the government benefits.

“The upper class should pay their fair-share and more but they pay less than some middle class because they take advantage of loopholes and other unknown to us incentives. The lower-class receives too much handouts and they get use to it. They too should pay their fair share.”

– Female, 50-64, Hispanic, South NM

There's more anger toward those at the top (and more support for anti-poverty efforts) than seen elsewhere, but stereotypical 1990's-style rhetoric around “lazy” people collecting endless welfare checks instead of getting a job still abounds.

New Mexicans also feel ignored in other ways:

- Smaller towns and rural areas feel neglected, left to languish because of their small size and/or distance from Albuquerque.
- Both Hispanics and whites often report feeling discriminated against. Some Hispanics feel held back by stereotypes, while others feel “not diverse by New Mexico standards.” A notable segment of whites feels ignored by government and employers alike, and feels that *not* being Hispanic puts them at a disadvantage in this state.
- There's even some sensitivity that New Mexico as a whole is a “second-class” state often forgotten by people around the country.

## Mapping the Mindset

### ❖ Frustrated

New Mexicans face mounting frustration about being “stuck” in a place of constant instability with their finances, while there’s stagnation on their wages and an inability to advance.

What’s uniquely New Mexican here is their perception of the state’s economy as chronically underdeveloped. They’re frustrated that New Mexico can’t support the types of jobs their children need, and are mystified by the inability of the government to bring in new industries – in particular, not capitalizing on the vast potential for renewable energy in the state.



*Every paycheck seems to be accompanied by a new pressing and unexpected financial situation that I need to take care of.*

– Male, 35-49, White, ABQ, Ind/Rep Lean

*No matter what we do, we cannot seem to improve our situation.*

– Female, 50-64, White, South NM

### ❖ Optimistic

Despite the frustrations and anxieties they face, New Mexicans remain optimistic. At a high level, the main source of this optimism is the recognition that they’ve made it work so far, through hard work and the support of their families and communities.

Many of those uncertain about their lives in the present remain hopeful for opportunities in the future because of:

- Education: Those in school, or going back to school, are optimistic about the doors that this will open for them
- New jobs: Although many are struggling in New Mexico’s job market, those starting new positions believe in themselves and their ability to succeed in their new roles
- Buying a home or car: Those who have recently purchased a home or are preparing to are proud of themselves and their ability to save and invest in their family’s future
- Getting out of debt: Debt is a burden many New Mexicans face – when they pay this off there’s a sense of newfound freedom they are able to enjoy

### ❖ Determined

New Mexicans are resilient, and proud of it. The combination of desert/rural survival skills, the western mentality, and even the necessity of navigating a structurally poor economy means, as one woman put it, “Achieving success in NM may take more gumption than in other places” (Female, 35-49, White, Northern NM).



*Never [thought] that I would be able to buy a brand new car by myself. It gave me hope and such a positive state of mind. I really can do anything and it's a great feeling and great example for my children so I can't wait to set my new goal and achieve it!*

– Female, 18-34, Hispanic, Northern NM

New Mexicans have faced adversity and challenges before in their own lives and pressed through it. They “have a lot more obstacles than advantages, so strong determination is a must to overcome obstacles” (Female, 18-34, Hispanic, Northern NM).





## Mapping the Mindset

### Personal Values

Before laying out the value pillars of the progressive narrative, we must understand the personal values New Mexicans bring to the table. Eventually, we look for where these values overlap with progressive values, which can help advance policy goals, and which progressives can “own” in a competitive environment. But, as with emotions, if progressives can’t demonstrate they understand the values below, or worse, seem to disrespect them, we will have lost before we have begun.

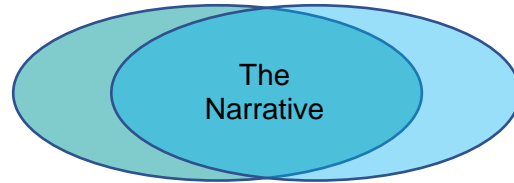
#### ❖ Family



*Family is central to identity, more than anything else, and not limited to just a few people, but stretching out into the community with long arms, encompassing at least tens, but often hundreds.*

– Male, 65+, White, Southern NM

New Mexico Values      Progressive Values



Family dominates life in New Mexico for people across demographics – and can extend deep into the community. Neighbors, as well as like-minded communities are there for each other. Family isn’t just a support system in New Mexico, but also a big part of New Mexicans’ social circle.

This prioritization of family dominates New Mexicans’ mindsets when it comes to many key issues. The issues that are often most important in their minds, such as safe communities, good schools, and good jobs, are about ensuring they can build a successful life for their family. Keeping family tightly knit – both emotionally and geographically – across generations is a key goal.

#### ❖ Culture

Heritage is a point of pride for the state – from the influence (and prevalence) of diverse cultures, to the traditions they carry on, to even the literal celebrations that result. To many, this heritage is not only a part of their daily lives, but also a part of their identity as individuals and as New Mexicans. It’s also something not just to celebrate, but also protect. Indeed, many see New Mexico’s diversity as a model for the country – one of the few things New Mexicans see their state as doing better than others.

Three interrelated dimensions of this value emerged:

- 1) Respect for other cultures and heritages
- 2) The benefits that come when different cultures blend and interact
- 3) The stabilizing force of traditions passed down through generations



*Our state's traditions are part of New Mexico's identity and daily life. Protecting our diversity and instilling its importance in our next generation is essential to ensuring our state thrives.*



*While many states see diversity as a problem to be addressed, New Mexico provides an example of how to embrace the opportunities that come when you respect others' traditions, heritage and culture.*

## Mapping the Mindset

### ❖ Responsibility

Though sometimes perceived by insiders and advocates as being all about “personal responsibility,” New Mexicans take a far more expansive view of responsibility as a value.

With a family that extends beyond blood relatives, it’s not just about themselves and their immediate family for New Mexicans. They feel a responsibility to contribute to and care about their community, society, and those in need. This is often intensified because they recognize there are more barriers to success because of the weaker economy in New Mexico, compared to other states.

### ❖ Respect and Kindness

The golden rule – treat others how you want to be treated – is prominent here, as it is elsewhere. However, there’s a level of politeness and kindness that’s seen by people as particularly New Mexican. Whether it’s helping those around them, respecting people’s opinions and decisions, or being a good role model to your own and others’ children.

“

*I love New Mexico, **I think it envelopes you in kindness** and there is nothing to do but give in to it. There's a mass mutual attitude that New Mexicans carry that allows them to speak with anybody. No judgements, criticism, people just get you. ...People do just get you, and there's always someone to lend a helping hand. **The "give unto others" saying comes to mind when I think about New Mexico values.***

– Male, 18-34, Hispanic, South NM

### ❖ Faith and Spirituality

Faith and spirituality in New Mexico is another aspect of community and culture. Many talk about religion influencing their own beliefs and traditions – from Native American spiritual practices to the dominance of the Catholic Church in many New Mexican towns.

For many, religion was a huge part of growing up and continues to bond them with their communities. For others, it is a big part of their daily life, their decision-making, and their moral compass. Still others speak more about how their spirituality – not necessarily linked to just one or any formal religion or practice – influences their life and shapes their values.

### ❖ Hard Work

Hard work – the idea that you can succeed if you’re given the right opportunities and work hard once you have them – is an ideal espoused across the demographic and ideological spectrums.

Many, however, feel this hugely important personal value is in short supply across New Mexico, with its “Land of Mañana” sentiment. Some blame New Mexico’s slow economic growth in part on this perceived lack of work ethic, and it helps engender the sentiment that “handouts” have run rampant in the state. Compounding the challenge is the fact that politicians are often seen as particularly divorced from this value.





### Pain Points

#### ❖ New Mexico's economy is chronically poor

New Mexicans believe the state's economy is poor and lagging because of structural issues more than the recession or slow recovery. They acutely covet the booms they see in states like Texas and California. They also sense that New Mexico remains separate from the national economy, which has its upsides (less subject to swings) but mostly downsides.

Many New Mexicans personally feel like they're treading water, without the ability to get ahead – and maybe even about to fall back. The lack of industries and state of the economy leave New Mexicans feeling that their prospects are slim, with low-wage jobs and little opportunity to advance. And this lack of jobs isn't hurting just hardworking New Mexicans, it's driving the younger, more educated from the state, because there's just such little opportunity.

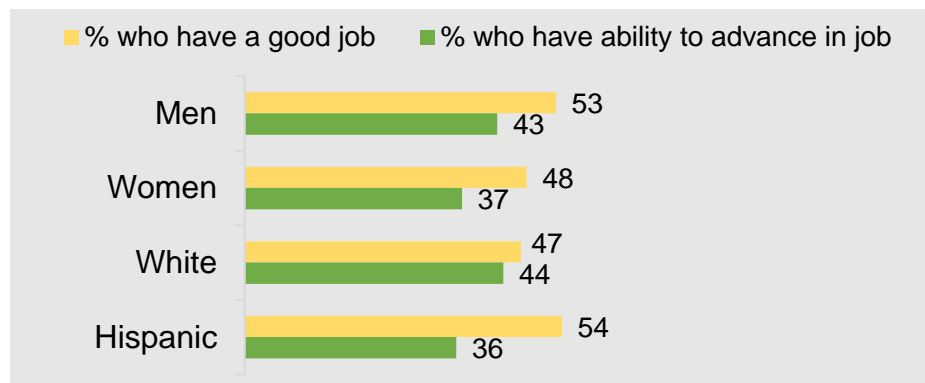
The interrelated factors blamed with remarkable consistency are:

- Economic dependency on the government and military
- Limited private industry beyond oil and gas
- Low-wage jobs

*Opportunities for progressives:*

- ❖ New Mexicans are very attuned to the state's industry mix, and see new industries as critical to fundamental change. They are particularly mystified that more effort has not been made to bring more of the clean energy industry to the state.
- ❖ The issue here is not just jobs – but jobs that offer decent pay and opportunity to advance. Creating more minimum wage jobs, rather than jobs that offer growth and a chance at a career, isn't the solution they're looking for. New Mexicans want to know that they, and their children, will be able to get ahead, not just get by.

***“Good Jobs” Are Not The Aspiration, It's “Jobs That Let You Get Ahead”***



## Mapping the Mindset

### ❖ New Mexico's education system isn't preparing children for the future

Beyond the economy, New Mexico's education system is a key issue to many in the state. New Mexicans place great value in education – it's clearly the dividing line in opportunity, and something they prioritize. But it's also clear to them just how far behind their schools are.

They know New Mexico's schools are ranked among the worst in the nation, are consistently underfunded, and are not paying teachers enough. As a result, good teachers are leaving and students are losing their chance to succeed. In turn, that hurts the whole economy.

Higher education – its cost and availability to all students – is also a distinct pain point for New Mexicans.

*Watch-out for progressives:*

- ❖ New Mexicans already know their schools are bad and neglected. But highlighting the institution while asking them to give it more money isn't the answer; it's more like a bad investment pitch. Don't educate the public about education funding and failures – they've got it. Focus on benefits they – their children and the economy – could reap.

### ❖ Those at the “top” and the “bottom” get everything, while everyday New Mexicans get overlooked

Like many across the nation, average New Mexicans resent feeling like the rich get loopholes and other advantages while the poor get handouts. Stuck in the middle, they feel too well-off to receive any benefits from the government, too poor for the benefits of wealth, and left footing the bill for the whole system.

Their resentment towards the “top” – particularly when framed more as the “well-off and well-connected” than just the wealthy or business in general – does exceed the resentment they feel towards those they feel collect handouts. But without proper inoculation or careful phrasing, some traditional language does set off alarm bells for people across the spectrum.



*It upsets me that my friend, who is a single mother, is living better than I am because...she gets so many other breaks through government benefits that she is doing better than someone like me that doesn't rely on the government.*

– Male, 35-49, White, Albuquerque



## Mapping the Mindset

### ❖ It's all about who you know, not how hard you work

Our team heard this phrase over and over from New Mexicans. It was typically applied to government corruption (both state and local), but also often applied in their own workplace or communities.

To New Mexicans, this sentiment is the antithesis of fairness. The corruption isn't just frustrating or shameful, the middle sees it as standing in the way of their success. Nepotism and favoritism keep them from getting better jobs and prevent leaders from making the choices necessary to strengthen New Mexico.

New Mexicans don't want smaller government, they want less corrupt government.

Which of the following will do more to create a stronger economy in New Mexico?

**All heard:** Get government out of the way, keep taxes low, and unleash the power of businesses and markets to create jobs

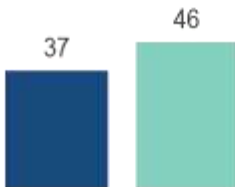
**1/3 heard:** Make smart investments and offer incentives to help attract new industries to New Mexico, which will bring more good-paying jobs and innovation

**1/3 heard:** Invest in New Mexicans by making education more affordable, and attracting good-paying jobs and pro-family policies that help balance work and family responsibilities

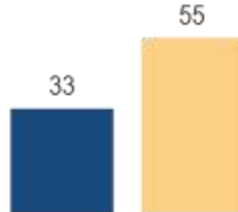
**1/3 heard:** Make government listen to the will of the people and get rid of the old boys' network so decisions are made in the best interest of New Mexico, not based on who you know

*Doesn't focus enough on people*

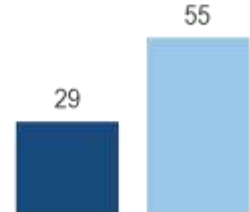
+9



+22



+26



*Taps into cynicism/frustration*

*Watch-out for progressives:*

- ❖ The historically context of party control at the state level makes it critical to strongly link corruption to “well-off, out-of-touch leaders” and the “well-connected interests they serve.”

### Aspirations

- 1) **Financial security and stability.** With a plurality of New Mexicans feeling like they are treading water in their personal financial situations, the goal for many is simply a sense of stability in their own life. And this means more than just the ability to pay their bills each month – they want to feel comfortable enough in their economic situation to know they can handle an unexpected emergency or expense.

**What stands in their way:** There are many obstacles standing in the way of financial security – from low-paying jobs, to lack of opportunity to advance, to the struggles of trying to get by in a weak economy. New Mexicans see their state as structurally poor and believe this, more than anything, is a barrier to security and stability.

- 2) **The freedom to live life the way they want.** The ultimate goal tied to the financial prospects of many New Mexicans isn't wealth or a prestigious job – it's the freedom to live life the way they want. In quantitative efforts, the team found an extremely high correlation between financial stability and security, and "freedom to live life the way you want."

**What stands in their way:** The financial hardships they face in their day to day lives inhibit New Mexicans from this freedom. Top anxieties include unexpected expenses, the cost of health care, the potential to lose their job, and affording the education they need.

- 3) **A safe and strong community for their family.** From ties to their culture, to community involvement, to family histories in the state that span generations, the roots New Mexicans have in their state are an incredibly enriching part of their lives. And as such, it's critically important to them that the communities to which they belong are able to thrive.

**What stands in their way:** Along with education and the economy, public safety is considered one of the state government's greatest responsibilities to its people, and also one of its biggest failings. Many reported not feeling safe, or even having personally experienced crime. They see gangs, homelessness and drunk driving incidents on the rise, especially in Albuquerque, and this problem is only perpetuated by a lack of resources dedicated to public safety.

- 4) **Confidence that the next generation or their kids will be better off than they are.** The desire for safe, strong communities is ultimately anchored in their hopes for their children. Keeping communities strong means creating a state where their children can live when they are grown – yet many see their state headed in the opposite direction. This means communities that are safe from crime, open and welcoming, connected to their heritage, and, more than anything, full of opportunity.

**What stands in their way:** New Mexico's lack of good jobs, struggling school system, and rise in crime are hurting families and hurting children. With parents struggling to get by, children across New Mexico are raised in a less positive environment than their parents were, and have less of a chance to succeed than the previous generation. New Mexicans want the most for their children, and lament, but also understand, that their state's lack of opportunity is driving the best and brightest away.

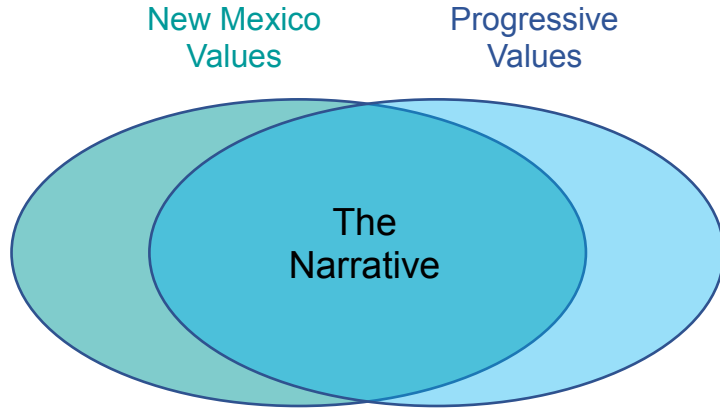


# The New Mexico Narrative

The New Mexico Narrative is rooted in the deeply-held values of New Mexicans and progressives. The strong emotional resonance of those values helps bind together different elements of the progressive agenda, intensify public support, motivate activists, and persuade others.

By reframing policy conversations using values as our guide, we can offer a vision that speaks to the hopes of the people. It encourages people to recognize common ground where it may not have seemed to exist before. And where policy disagreements remain, citizens will still understand the core, consistent ideals shaping the progressive position. Those values that shape the foundation of the narrative include:

- ❖ Family and community
- ❖ Fairness
- ❖ Opportunity
- ❖ Respect



## The Hero: Families

Any good Narrative has a hero, and the hero in New Mexico is the family – the family that’s working hard, doing good in their community, and yearning to create a successful life for themselves and their children. It’s the family that’s not well-off or well-connected, that’s been ignored by the political system and the economy, and that’s seen real struggle and is fighting through it. It’s the family that wants New Mexico to get strong so their children will stay here.

Importantly, however, though this may seem like strong terrain for those on the left, too often the perception is progressives only focus on those at the bottom to the exclusion of those in the middle. There is a critical need to show how the progressive agenda helps the hero that the vast majority of people have in their head: the family working hard to lift themselves up. This by no means implies we shouldn’t also address the needs of those who have fallen down; rather, it acknowledges that the “middle” will have more appetite to support reforms that help those “at the bottom” if they feel their needs are also being addressed.

Many perceive progressives only look out for...	People who’ve fallen down: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Families facing hardship and tragedy</li> <li>• People without enough to survive</li> </ul>
The “vast middle’s” heroes are...	People who want to lift themselves up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People without enough to create a successful life for their family</li> <li>• Families trying to avoid hardship and tragedy</li> <li>• Small business owners or potential owners</li> </ul>

## The New Mexico Narrative

### The Villain: The well-off and well-connected

The “well-off and well-connected” encompass the big corporations, the rich, politicians, and political groups who don’t just get all the breaks by rigging the system, but also hurt everyday New Mexicans in the process.

When setting up the villain, avoid over-relying on traditional national tropes of “big corporations and the wealthy.” Certainly, New Mexicans want to see them pay their fair share and follow the rules, and don’t believe they currently always do that. But the relationship is more nuanced here than elsewhere.

For one, most people don’t believe there are very many “wealthy” people in New Mexico – especially not of the scale the phrase typically implies. Indeed, to the extent the super-rich are a villain, it is super-rich politicians. One of conservatives’ biggest vulnerabilities is that they are dominated by wealthy, out-of-touch leaders.

New Mexicans are also of two minds regarding big corporations – they want to hold corporations accountable to pay their fair share and act responsibly, but also recognize New Mexico’s overwhelming need for businesses to come here, grow, and create jobs.

In short, don’t shy away from the idea of getting the wealthy and big corporations to pay their fair share, or fighting corporate giveaways and loopholes. But instead of using traditional political language:

- 1) Be particular about the type of corporation that’s the problem:



*The real problem keeping middle- and working-class families down is that too many others aren’t paying their fair share – like the big corporations getting huge giveaways and exploiting loopholes that their high-priced lobbyists get them.*

- 2) Show how the villain/the opposition harms the heroes:



*The opposition would rather protect the big oil and gas interests that fund their campaigns than allow the clean energy industry to thrive here, and they’ve sold out our schools for corporate tax cuts and giveaways.*

- 3) Tap the real pain point:



*We need to make government listen to the will of the people and get rid of the old boys’ network (and/or well-connected insiders) so decisions are made in the best interest of New Mexico, not based on who you know.*





### Pillar #1: Family and Community

Family is at the heart of New Mexican life, values, and thus, the New Mexico Narrative. For some, the lines between family and community blur. For others, their community provides a support system, just not as intensely as a family might. But nearly all agree on this: family and community are the key building blocks in a child's success.

Our team links these two concepts not just because so many in New Mexico naturally do already, but also because the combination neatly sets up some of progressives' top agenda items.

#### Aspirations to tap into...

- An overwhelming desire to create a successful life for their family
- Their desire to have their children stay close once they are grown

#### ...and pain points:

- Communities are increasingly unsafe and schools are getting worse
- Their kids will have to move to other states if they want to get good jobs
- The poverty and homelessness they see in their own communities

#### Framing progressives:



*We believe raising the next generation of New Mexicans to be successful requires strong families and strong communities.*



*Government should serve hardworking families, and should invest in our state and communities so our children want to and can live here when they are grown.*

#### Drawing the contrast:

The sense that progressives will strengthen families and communities proves one of our biggest perceived advantages. We can and should go on strong offense with how conservative policies weaken them:



*The opposition's policies weaken families and communities because they put political ideology ahead of what's best for New Mexico.*

#### Remember the rules: Be forward-looking and solution-oriented

- × Don't: Lead with the negative by talking about how many kids in New Mexico don't have strong families or safe communities. The team found messages that opened with what we need to or can do, as opposed to what we are doing wrong, more engaging.

### Pillar #2: Fairness

New Mexicans see unfairness across all aspects of society – especially in government and the workplace, but also education, the economy, elections, and the justice system.

They see unfairness in nepotism and corruption in government and board rooms, schools that fail to create a level playing field and give kids the opportunities they need, an economy that serves the well-off while everyday New Mexicans lose their homes, and a system that condemns addicts and their families to a vicious cycle. They don't expect anything to be perfectly fair, but we definitely could and should be doing a lot better. Creating a New Mexico that is *more* fair is the first step to success.

#### Aspirations to tap into...

- A level playing field for New Mexico's children
- An economy that rewards hard work, not just connections
- A society where all people do their part and pay their fair share
- A government that serves them

#### ...and pain points:

- Government is run by and serves only the well-connected elites
- Getting the job you want, or a promotion at the one you have, is all about who you know
- They are working harder and harder just to get by, and seeing no rewards for it

#### Framing progressives:



*We believe we need more fairness in society, in the economy, and in government. Our challenge is to create a more equal society and a fairer economy where everyone has the chance to achieve the American Dream.*



*Government should represent hardworking, everyday New Mexicans – not just those with insider ties. Success should be about how hard you work, not who you know.*



*Individuals, businesses, and government all have a responsibility to do their part and pay their fair share.*

#### Drawing the contrast:

Frame corruption around the opposition's biggest vulnerabilities:



*The opposition is run by wealthy elites that only serve the well-off and well-connected – not everyday New Mexicans.*

#### Remember the rules: Use their language

When New Mexicans talk about the need for fairness, they very consistently say we need “**more** fairness in society/the economy/the government,” as opposed to “a **fair** society.” A completely and definitively “fair” descriptor sounds naïve at best, and sets off “forced equality” alarm bells at worst.

- ✓ Do: Say we need “more fairness”
- ✗ Don't: Use more absolutist phrases like “a fair economy”

### Pillar #3: Opportunity

Opportunity is the keystone of the American and New Mexican Dream: the belief that with the right opportunities and hard work, you can succeed. Creating opportunity – through good schools and higher education options, but also safe communities, small businesses, and jobs that let you balance work and family – is the key to economic success for New Mexicans, and to building a state where New Mexican children can live when they're grown.

#### Aspirations to tap into...

- Freedom to live the life you want – and the financial security and stability you need to do that
- A government that creates opportunities, not barriers, for people who want to work hard

#### ...and pain points:

- Working hard is no longer enough – only those with connections get the opportunities they need to succeed
- Politicians who stand in the way of opportunity for everyday New Mexicans

#### Framing progressives:



*We believe everyone – not just those with connections – should have opportunities to better themselves.*



*Government should create opportunities for people who want to work hard.*

#### Drawing the contrast:

Show how our opponents put ideology ahead of what's best for New Mexicans – i.e. that they stand in the way of the opportunity we could create with clean energy, good schools, more small businesses, etc.



*The opposition puts political ideology ahead of New Mexico's economy. They'd rather protect the big oil and gas interests that fund their campaigns than allow the clean energy industry to thrive here; and they've sold out our schools and small businesses for corporate tax cuts and giveaways.*

#### Remember the rules: Use their language and know our own vulnerabilities

- ✓ Stronger: Create opportunity for people to **better themselves...**
  - The bolded phrase is critical to show progressives connect opportunity with individual agency and hard work
- ✓ Stronger: ...instead of putting barriers in the way.
- ✗ Weaker: ...and remove obstacles from people's paths.

### Pillar #4: Respect

Respect in New Mexico stretches from how people treat each other, to how laws are made and enforced, to how poverty is thought about and how culture and tradition are treated.

“Respect” in New Mexico is equal parts kindness and reverence, and its prioritization is a reaction to the sense that respect is deteriorating in all other aspects of American life.

Respect is what creates and maintains strong communities, helps avoid problems and gets us through crises when they do happen.

#### Aspirations to tap into...

- The golden rule: All New Mexicans should be respectful and be respected
- New Mexico’s mix of cultures, heritage, and traditions must be preserved and respected, and they will keep us strong in return

#### ...and pain points:

- Concerns about lack of respect in public life today
- Fear that the two-way street – e.g. people respect the law and vice-versa, do unto others, etc. – is breaking down

#### Framing progressives:



*Our laws and our government should reflect New Mexico’s basic value of respect for all people.*



*We believe everyone needs to respect the law and the law needs to respect everyone.*



*Respecting our diversity, our traditions and each other – and instilling those values in the next generation – is critical to ensuring our state thrives.*



*As New Mexicans we value kindness and respect, and we must make it a priority to enact policies that help New Mexicans rise out of poverty.*

#### Drawing the contrast:

From how we treat people to how we take care of New Mexico’s resources, conservative policies can be framed as not respecting New Mexico or New Mexicans.



*The opposition’s policies don’t respect the basic dignity of people, or what is special about New Mexico, our land, and our values.*

#### Remember the rules: Meet New Mexicans where they are

- Respect is a two-way street, and we need to acknowledge that whenever appropriate (e.g. law enforcement/justice system)

### The Progressive Narrative: The Master Message

The following messaging represents the distillation of the four value pillars into a progressive vision of government, leadership, the economy, and the rules of society in general. As appropriate, advocates can confidently use the following – or pieces of it – to frame their agenda, motivate, and persuade.

Raising the next generation of New Mexicans to be successful requires strong families and strong communities. To do that:

Children should start on a level playing field where they all have a chance to succeed.

New Mexico needs more opportunities for hardworking people to better themselves.

Our cultures and traditions must be protected and respected.

We need more fairness in society, the economy and in government.

It's time to start rewarding people based on what they do, not who they know.

Government should serve New Mexican families – not the well-off and well-connected.

Everyone needs to respect the law and the law needs to respect everyone.

## Using the Narrative: 7 Rules

The seven rules below help put the Narrative into practice. This method also can and should be used for any communication challenge. It's meant to guide advocates as they collect the necessary insights and information to address their particular challenge and frame strategies.

### 1. Meet New Mexicans where they are

Understanding people's deeply-held values, attitudes, aspirations, and pain points is the first step to building a strong emotional bond and resonant Narrative. We're not looking to convince New Mexicans that progressives are right, but rather that we "get it" with messaging that pulls the right emotional levers and pushes the right buttons. See the **Mindset (pp.3-11)** section for more.

### 2. Connect on shared, deeply-held values

For progressive issue messaging to be effective, we must prove we share New Mexican values. Shared values go a long way toward both persuading and activating audiences, especially on issues where they may have less personal stake, interest, or understanding. Check out **Personal Values (pp.6-7)** and the Narrative's **Value Pillars (pp.14-17)** for more.

### 3. Know and address your own vulnerabilities

Each of the **Narrative In Action** write-ups (**pp.21-28**) have more specific information on progressives' vulnerabilities on topics, but the two most dominant are:

- The fact state government has been controlled by one party for so long means politicians are often associated with the corruption and cronyism people see now.
- Progressives have big deficits on economic attributes in New Mexico, where people are angry about a perceived handout culture they feel encourages dependence, while government and the economy seem to ignore or even punish those at or just below "the middle."

### 4. Define the opposition

Again, each of the **Narrative In Action** write-ups (**pp.21-28**) have more specific information on conservatives' vulnerabilities on topics, but the two most dominant are:

- They put their political ideology ahead of what's best for New Mexico.
- They're defined by well-off, out-of-touch leaders and the well-connected special interests they serve.

Reframing these weaknesses as the source of corruption in New Mexico can alleviate our vulnerability on perceived cronyism, while highlighting theirs and starting to debunk their perceived economic strengths.





## Using the Narrative: 7 Rules

### 5. Be forward-looking and solution-oriented

Despite the disappointment and doubts people have about New Mexico, our team often found painting a negative picture of the state undermined our case for investments or action. That doesn't mean our team recommends sounding Pollyanna-ish, but progressives must show they have solutions, not just complaints.

We found this was particularly true when it comes to education and poverty (**pp.25-28**).

### 6. Use their (clear, simple) language

Advocates tend to develop their own internal code, short-handing concepts and ideas that don't always translate well or transmit the right signals. Understanding how New Mexicans talk about their values – and what they hear when progressives talk about theirs – is a core goal of the Narrative.

See the **Do's and Don'ts Tear Sheet (p.37)** for more but the most important examples include:

- Use “*more* fairness” instead of an over-idealistic, blanket “fair”
- Signal we believe in rewarding hard work and “opportunities for people *to better themselves*”
- Talk about the “well-off,” or “well-connected” – instead of always defaulting to “the rich, corporations, special interests”

### 7. Use it widely

By design, the Narrative has very broad-based appeal. It speaks to those in the “middle” of the spectrum, but great care is taken to ensure it also appeals to, and never alienates, those in our base. There are certainly times, places, and issues where customizing for a particular audience can help, but using one Narrative consistently across audiences will help amplify it and make it feel more authentic to voters.

# Talking about the Economy

### #1: Meet New Mexicans Where They Are

Progressives must offer a positive economic vision that shows benefits for hardworking, everyday New Mexicans.

Currently, New Mexicans feel anxious and frustrated with the economy. Stagnant wages and limited opportunities have them feeling stuck. Many live paycheck-to-paycheck, unprepared to deal with a sudden emergency, and burdened by health care bills. There are too few industries in New Mexico and too many of the businesses here offer jobs with low wages and no benefits, with no opportunity for advancement. They aren't looking for more jobs or "good jobs" so much as "a job that lets them get ahead" and "a job that lets them balance work and family." They are desperate for security and stability, and aspire for economic freedom.

### #2: Connect on Shared, Deeply-held Values

New Mexicans value hard work and personal responsibility, but they also acknowledge systemic barriers in New Mexico that get in the way of their success. Connect on:

- ❖ The shared aspiration of building a successful life for one's **family**, and recognition that it takes a strong **community**
- ❖ Their belief that New Mexicans need more **opportunities** for people who want to work hard and better themselves
- ❖ Their sense of **fairness**, and an economy that rewards how hard you work, not "who you know"
- ❖ Their belief that individuals, businesses, and the government all need to do their part and pay their fair share

### #3: Know and Address Your Own Vulnerabilities

Conservatives are more closely associated with creating jobs than progressives. There's more success when the debate is framed around "jobs with decent pay and benefits," and "jobs that let you get ahead."

A bigger vulnerability for progressives is the perceived "handout culture" that angers many New Mexicans, and leaves us vulnerable to messaging from the opposition that rubs this nerve. Emphasizing the progressive belief in creating opportunities for *people who want to work hard* is crucial to push back against this.

While conservatives currently own personal responsibility, progressives can overcome this by focusing on policies that help people help themselves.



*We need more opportunities for hardworking New Mexicans to better themselves.*



## Bringing It All Together: Narrative In Action

### #4: Define the Opposition

As we drive our positive economic vision for New Mexico, we must also draw a clear contrast with the opposition and their vision.

The strength conservatives have on fiscal issues thanks to long-term stereotypes needs to be challenged. That requires a credible argument, which our team found to be that they put ideology and the well-connected before the best interests of New Mexico and all New Mexicans.

Lean into New Mexicans' anger about limited industries, particularly clean energy, and show that they do more than just oppose spending – they hurt the economy and our kids' future to protect their own interests.



*They put political ideology ahead of New Mexico's economy. They'd rather protect the big oil and gas interests that fund their campaigns than allow the clean energy industry to thrive here, and they've sold out our schools for corporate tax cuts and giveaways.*



*They serve the well-connected, not the hardworking people trying to better themselves: the big banks, not the families trying to afford college; the corporations lobbying for loopholes, not the small-business owners trying to compete.*

### #5: Be Forward-looking and Solution-oriented

Framing our economic message as investing in the future increases support for progressive policies. Complaining about current policies and leadership only bolsters the opposition.

- ❖ Create an economy with well-paying jobs that offer an opportunity to get ahead.
- ❖ Ensure corporations pay their fair share in taxes so New Mexico can invest in the communities that support them
- ❖ Encourage small businesses to start and grow in New Mexico
- ❖ Bring new industries to the state, such as clean energy
- ❖ Help support stronger families with workplace policies like sick leave and maternity and paternity leave

### #6: Use Their (Clear, Simple) Language



*New Mexico needs more opportunities for hardworking people to get ahead and jobs that let people balance work and family responsibilities.*



*Economic security means it needs to be possible to go to school without taking on crippling debt or start a small business without already being a millionaire.*

### #7: Use it Widely

# Talking About Government

### #1: Meet New Mexicans Where They Are

New Mexicans see the state government's responsibilities to primarily be education, public safety, and the economy; indeed, they tend to see a more prominent role for government in shaping the economy than voters elsewhere (likely because of its outsize role as an employer).

On all three fronts, they see a government that's failing. Their biggest painpoint is they feel the state government is corrupt and dominated by wealthy, out-of-touch leaders who are in the pockets of big corporations and special interests. To them, the government practically invented the concept of "it's not what you know, it's who you know."

We need to offer a progressive vision of government that invests in the future while living up to New Mexican values.

The people don't want less government or a smaller government, they want one that serves them and their aspirations.

### #2: Connect on Shared, Deeply-held Values



*Government needs to serve hardworking families and help build strong communities and schools for the next generation.*



*Government should create **opportunities** so people can better themselves with hard work. That means **good schools, safe communities, and jobs** that let you balance work and family.*



*New Mexico will succeed when people, businesses and the government recognize that we all have a shared **responsibility** to work together.*

### #3: Know and Address Your Own Vulnerabilities

The fact the state government has been controlled by one party for so long means politicians are often associated with the corruption and cronyism people see. Offering a vision of government that explicitly fights the notion of "it's who you know" should be our central focus, as well as elevating leaders who are in touch with average people, not the wealthy, and can demonstrate an ethos of service.



## Bringing It All Together: Narrative In Action

### #4: Define the Opposition

The overarching framework for a conservative agenda is that it weakens families and communities.

Also, as noted above, we want to show that conservatives put political ideology ahead of New Mexico's economy. A similar frame can be used in their vision of government, which doesn't serve hardworking New Mexicans, but rather:



*They stand in the way of opportunity by protecting big oil and gas rather than letting the clean energy industry thrive here, or by leaving schools unfunded*



*They only serve those who "cut the line" by paying lobbyists and special interests*



*They are dominated by wealthy, out-of-touch politicians*

### #5: Be Forward-looking and Solution-oriented

For all three of the major areas they hold government responsible for – education, public safety, the economy – the current view is that they are all bad, and getting worse. We don't need to convince them of that or intensify that belief, we need to show we have ideas that are NOT: 1) more of the same or 2) just about more spending.

### #6: Use Their (Clear, Simple) Language



*Government needs to invest in our state and our communities so our children want to and can live here when they are grown.*



*Government should represent hardworking, everyday New Mexicans – not just the well-off and well-connected.*



*Everyone needs to respect the law and the law needs to respect everyone.*



*We need more fairness at all levels of government and society.*

### #7: Use it Widely

# Talking About Education

*Note: For the economy and government sections, our team has extensive messaging research to reference. For this section, the team dug deeply into the underlying mindsets, aspirations, and pain points but has a more limited set of tested talking points. The team offers these insights to help guide and inform your own work, not supercede it.*

### #1: Meet New Mexicans Where They Are

Education is a singularly important priority for New Mexicans. It is the key to opportunity. They know New Mexico ranks quite low compared to other states, strongly believe classrooms are underfunded and feel good teachers go elsewhere because of low salaries. A bad education system fails our kids and harms our economy.

Higher education in particular is seen as the great dividing line between those who have a fair shot and those that don't. They want to see more of the popular scholarship program, but they also want to see more options beyond a traditional 4-year degree.

### #2: Connect On Shared, Deeply-held Values

Lean into both fairness and opportunity...:



*We must make education a priority so that **every New Mexican child has the opportunity to succeed.***

...and anchor education messages around benefits to the entire community:



*We can't be short-sighted when it comes to our kids. Investments in education are investments in **safe communities** and future economic success.*

### #3: Know And Address Your Own Vulnerabilities

New Mexicans in theory and at first blush know that schools are underfunded and want to see funding increased. A majority of the public, however, are at least as bothered by their sense that progressives' only solution seems to be to pour more money into a broken education system as they are by their sense that conservatives just want to cut spending. We need a vision and solutions for education that don't start and end with "more money."





## Bringing It All Together: Narrative In Action

### #4: Define the Opposition

The powerful pain point on conservatives and education isn't the fact that they won't put more money into the system. We need to connect their lack of support for schools back to motives and values.



*They put their ideology ahead of what's best for New Mexico and its future, and stand in the way of opportunity.*

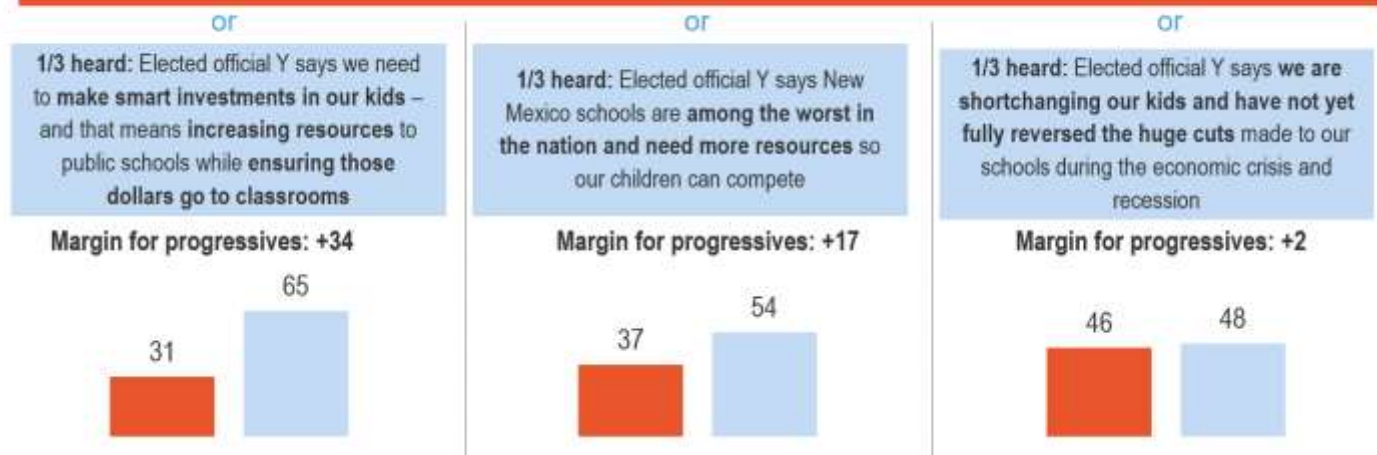
### #5: Be Forward-looking and Solution-oriented

New Mexicans know the schools are failing and weaker than other states. We don't need to keep reminding them and actually found it can be harmful to lead with negative statistics or other condemnation of the schools. Remember, we are essentially making an investment pitch – don't tell them it's a terrible system, tell them it can be improved.

The more progressives frame our education message as forward-looking and based on solutions, the stronger the message resonates.

Who do you agree with more?

All heard: Elected official X says New Mexico schools get plenty of money, but too much money gets wasted on bureaucracy



### #6: Use Their (Clear, Simple) Language

We also have an exploitable weakness around people's sense that money goes to the "bureaucracy" and not classrooms – so ensure you aren't just talking about money for "schools broadly" or "the education system," and instead be specific about classrooms and teachers.



*We need to make smart investments in our kids – and that means increasing resources to our children's classrooms and teachers.*

### #7: Use it Widely

# Talking About Poverty

*Note: For the economy and government sections, our team has extensive messaging research to reference. For this section, the team dug deeply into the underlying mindsets, aspirations, and pain points but has a more limited set of tested talking points. The team offers these insights to help guide and inform your own work, not supercede it.*

### #1: Meet New Mexicans Where They Are

On poverty issues, “meeting New Mexicans where they are” is particularly challenging because most New Mexicans have some significant internal tensions on this issue:

- ❖ They have great sympathy, and often empathy, for those living in poverty – especially children, and those battling addiction... but they are also angry at what they sense is a huge number of people who are simply “lazy” and living off the government.
- ❖ They want the government to help people living in poverty, but they are so mired in their own financial anxiety and stress, that they resent the government not helping them too/first.

This, compounded with their sense that poverty and homelessness are making neighborhoods more unsafe, leads to many potential pitfalls on this issue.

### #2: Connect On Shared, Deeply-held Values

Respect is the dominant value in play here, but we should also lean into responsibility and community:



*As New Mexicans we value kindness and respect – and must make it a priority to enact policies that help New Mexicans rise out of poverty.*



*New Mexico will succeed when people, businesses and the government recognize that we all have a shared responsibility, one that is about more than just taking care of yourself – but also doing right by your larger community.*

### #3: Know And Address Your Own Vulnerabilities

Both to address progressives’ vulnerability that people think they perpetuate a handout culture and throw money at problems, and to address rule #5 (show we are forward-looking and solution-oriented), it’s important to emphasize the end goal:

- ✓ Talk more about: Investing in programs aimed at reducing poverty across New Mexico
- ✗ Talk less about: Expanding services to people living in poverty



## Bringing It All Together: Narrative In Action

### #4: Define the Opposition

As elsewhere, we want to show the opposition's political ideology trumping what's best for New Mexico because they are:

- Dominated by wealthy and out of touch leaders
- In the pocket of big corporations and special interests

Emphasize the growing inequality:



*Too many New Mexicans today live in poverty, and the gap between them and the wealthiest only continues to grow.*

And link it back to the policies they stand in the way of: increased minimum wage, job training, addiction services, and other efforts that help people help themselves.

### #5: Be Forward-looking and Solution-oriented

See #3

### #6: Use Their (Clear, Simple) Language



*New Mexicans value kindness and respect and our policies toward those in need should respect that.*



*Our state would be stronger if our laws and government reflected New Mexico's basic value of respect for all people.*

### #7: Use it Widely

## Portraits of New Mexicans

Over three weeks, our team listened to nearly 50 New Mexicans across the state tell us about their lives. The team asked about everything: their hopes and dreams, their values, their fears, and their day-to-day work and home lives.

A series of in-depth journal entries – completed over the three weeks – gave our team insights into respondents' lives in an extremely personal setting (much like a personal diary). The questions were detailed and multi-layered, and queried them to think about their lives in ways that are outside the everyday. Our team also asked about their views on government and the future of New Mexico.

The portraits that follow provide a glimpse into the world of average New Mexicans.



### #1: Female, Hispanic, 18-34, North, Democrat

#### On her economic situation:

Dire is the only word I chose to describe my financial situation right now. My husband and I lost our son, my stepson, in September and ended up losing our jobs because of too much time missed while grieving. Since then finding adequate paying work has been difficult and having only one car between the two of us limits our options. My husband and I have had to resort to donating plasma to survive.

... My husband and I were able to support each other through the healing process. It is ongoing and will be for the rest of our lives but we are stronger than we were before. I've seen and heard too many times that this kind of tragedy can tear people apart.

#### On working hard:

In the last five years I earned my nursing degree. That was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I love what I do and up until a year ago I felt very secure financially. Since the death of my stepson, I lost my job and lost a car in the process. Finding work for my husband and I with only one car has been difficult. We live in an area that public transportation is not available and the closest place of business is 10 miles away, so even one of us biking to work is difficult.

At this point I don't know what opportunities can help us.... Being out of work and unable to pay bills is hard enough without the constant reminder from creditors threatening my family. A program that could train my husband while he works, almost like on the job training. So that we don't have to choose work or school.... Vicious cycle of making struggling people struggle more in order to succeed SOMEDAY.

#### On being “stuck in the middle”:

While in high school, I made sure to focus on school and not get pregnant.... Once I did enter college, I still did not have children because I believed that it was the responsible thing to do to be able support them before having them. I ended up qualifying for very little financial aid because I had no dependents. I ended up discovering that there were other students that had children and received welfare, food assistance and financial aid and the amount received increased based on the number of dependents.

#### On looking out for her community:

Meals on Wheels is one of the organizations that has played a big role in my life. At age 20 I was new to the Albuquerque area and did not know my way around. Meals on Wheels provided me with a way to explore my new home while helping others. I was warned before I moved that some parts of the city were dangerous and I should not enter them for any reason. My Meals on Wheels route just happen to be one of these supposed dangerous areas. I ended up learning that the people of this area are just as friendly and welcoming as anyone else. Today, 15 years later, my husband and I have a route together and enjoy helping people together. If I have children again, they will also join us on our route.

### #2: Male, White, 65+, South, Independent/Dem Lean

#### On his financial security:

[I'm] swimming with [my] head above water. There's enough back up resources available...to suggest survival in bad weather. But if one has to stretch those resources enough, through "tough times," eventually the rubber band will break...or should I say the life boat will sink.

As I get into my senior citizen years, I'm concerned I won't be able to fully retire, I'm concerned that drug and health care costs will be catastrophic to my economic resources, and especially I'm concerned that long term nursing home care will exceed any resources available.

#### On New Mexico's economy:

We are at risk: being a state with high rates of poverty, being dependent on Oil and Gas prices, being dependent on the level of federal funding incoming to the state each year, and being dependent on water resources in decline. If we aren't addressing those in the way they need to be addressed, NM could become a state people move away from and where services don't work, and hope is hard to find for a better tomorrow.

#### On the role of government:

State government should be involved in those things for which local input is most important, such as education and community services, law enforcement, environmental health and commerce at the regional or local level. And regional infrastructure such as in state highways, and local roads, in state utilities. The state should also help out with employment services, and unemployment and safety net support to supplement federal support as necessary

We need to aggressively pursue commercial space, video and film production, and support our various R&D labs vigorously, so that they might expand and thrive. We need to make sure the infrastructure and regulatory environment is in place to support startups and innovation.... We need to pursue development of affordable regeneration of water resources though desalination plants run on solar energy. Becoming a worldwide leader in that technology would be very very smart for the long term health of NM.

#### On family and values:

I grew up in a stable family, my father worked in a white collar job, which put us in the middle class, but we didn't buy a new car every year, and bought our clothes through the Sears Catalog, if that tells you anything.... Education was taken seriously by almost everyone in the community...including parents. My mother read stories to my sister and I a LOT. This was a huge advantage. I won/ earned a National Merit Scholarship...so probably the stable quality of the environment which supported a high quality education was the biggest advantage.





### #3: Male, Native American, 35-49, ABQ, Independent/Rep Lean

#### On his economic situation:

Always a struggle. I can never seem to get ahead and even though they talk about raising the minimum wage... then you can definitely expect that housing gas food insurance and everything else will go up.

I love my work and I feel very [un]appreciated by the amount of money that I bring home. With what I do just doesn't seem to be enough for the job that I do perform.

#### On culture and tradition:

I grew up in New Mexico and my mother's family has lived in New Mexico for as long as New Mexico was inhabited. I believe same old brings forth same old. I understand tradition but some traditions are wrong and yet we carry them on. I think that when culture plays a part in decisions that affect the livelihood of every individual in the state without any beneficial effects to those individuals then we need to rethink our paths. Pride can be a downfall as well as an asset, but being able to tell the difference is the problem for most.

#### On corruption in New Mexico:

With certain individuals (unnamed) willing to line their pockets and allow only those companies that can make this happen into New Mexico we as a state will not move forward out of any recession.... I am looking elsewhere for work at this moment with very good prospects in Colorado and Oregon.... It takes money and opportunity to succeed in New Mexico. Both of which aren't afforded [to] everybody.

#### On New Mexican values:

(1) Family Helps Family. To me it takes a whole village to raise a child is the most common saying. We can all succeed or all fail together. (2) Hard work is not an option but a responsibility belonging to every individual. To me that means we all must carry our own weight and to go above and beyond is not uncommon. (3) A clean environment is a right for every individual. To me that means that my children and their children and so on deserve to live in an environment in which they do not have to be concerned of the living conditions; including home, parks, public areas, etc.

#### On government benefits:

I came from a poor neighborhood in an area which my mother needed government assistance so we may survive. They helped us in a lot of ways in that manner but at the same time when she got sick there was no help for us so I was unable to continue my education due to the fact that I had to help my mother and my two little sisters even though at which time I was in the gifted program and I was told I'd be awarded a scholarship anywhere in the country at any school fully paid as long as I finished school. At my age I was unable to continue because there was no other way or means to help my family especially when she passed away so I ended up having to drop out and there went my dream of finishing college with a PhD.

## #4: Female, Hispanic, 35-49, South, Republican

### On her economic situation:

I feel defeated on my way to work. I am extremely unhappy at my job and I feel like I am under appreciated.... There never seems to be enough money to last during the month and nothing left over to save. I am not able to even afford health insurance at this time.

### On her aspirations:

I want to be financially secure and in a permanent position where I will not have to live paycheck to paycheck. I would also love to be a business owner again but would need to devote more time and effort to the business.... I have re enrolled in school to take an additional class in a new discipline that I believe will help me make an education decision to restart my business.

### On problems New Mexico faces:

I think New Mexico is falling behind in education, jobs, and help for addicts. New Mexico has a huge drug problem that results in high crime and child abuse. There [are] no options for those addicts that want a better life. The lack of a good quality education is also a trigger for people to become addicts in the future.

I think NM is far behind other states, especially those that have come up with other ways to create revenue for their state. NM is not attracting big companies or companies that will bring jobs and more money to New Mexicans. I do not feel like NM has recovered from the economic crisis. There are no jobs in New Mexico and many public services are suffering because of the budget shortfall. Citizens are enjoying low gas prices but those employees that work in the oil business are suffering now.

### On the importance of education:

The idea of opportunity means to me a chance to better yourself, whether it be in your career or going back to school.... Education should be equal across the board and those student that live in a rich school district should have the same materials as those children in a poorer district. The money used for education should be distributed equally.

I think the state government needs to focus on education. If we provide a good quality education to our kids, it can make a huge difference in many aspects. NM could be more competitive in education, become more appealing to big businesses, and all this would help boost the economy.

### On fairness in education:

A level playing field means that everyone has a fair and equal chance at being successful. I think it would be more of a level playing field if everyone was given the same opportunities including education, higher education and job opportunities. If NM had a level-playing field, there would be more money invested in education and the same opportunities given to everyone in the state, regardless of where they live or how much their school district had in the budget.



## The Progressive Narrative: The Master Message

Raising the next generation of New Mexicans to be successful requires strong families and strong communities. To do that:

Children should start on a level playing field where they all have a chance to succeed.

New Mexico needs more opportunities for hardworking people to better themselves.

Our cultures and traditions must be protected and respected.

We need more fairness in society, in the economy and in government.

It's time to start rewarding people based on what they do, not who they know.

Government should serve New Mexican families – not the well-off and well-connected.

Everyone needs to respect the law and the law needs to respect everyone.

## 7 Rules For Using The Narrative

- 1. Meet New Mexicans where they are**
- 2. Connect on shared, deeply-held values**
- 3. Know and address your own vulnerabilities**
- 4. Define the opposition**
- 5. Be forward-looking and solution-oriented**
- 6. Use their (clear, simple) language**
- 7. Use it widely**

## Mindset Map



### Emotions and Feelings

- **Anxious:** Finances are the greatest cause for anxiety, a constant stressor for those struggling to keep up.
- **Ignored:** New Mexicans across the state feel there's nothing for those in the middle, there's a disadvantage for non-Hispanics, and that rural areas are neglected.
- **Frustrated:** Mounting over their inability to find stability and get "unstuck" financially
- **Optimistic:** They remain optimistic about their potential to succeed, looking to their families and communities
- **Determined:** They believe in their own strength, and know they have what it takes to get ahead



### Pain Points

- New Mexico's economy seen as poor and lagging because of structural issues more than recession. Doing worse than most other states – and headed in the wrong direction
- Too many low-wage, no benefit jobs that offer little ability to advance
- It's too often about "who you know"
- Poor education system – both for kids and high school graduates
- Health care expenses and caregiving needs



### Personal Values

- **Family:** Dominates life in NM – and can extend deep into the community (not just immediate fam)
- **Culture:** Heritage and traditions a point of pride, and many see NM's diversity as a model for the country
- **Resilience:** Structural problems in the state mean New Mexicans are tough – because they have to be
- **Responsibility:** Not just you and your family, but also contributing to and caring about your community
- **Respect:** The golden rule is prominent – kindness and politeness seen as unique to NM
- **Faith/Spirituality:** Held over from growing up in NM, seen as another aspect of community and culture



### Aspirations

- Financial security and stability – knowing you can handle an unexpected emergency or expense
- Financial flexibility and the freedom to live life the way you want
- Safe community for your family
- Confidence that the next generation/their kids will be better off than they are

## The Value Pillars



### Family and Community

**We believe** raising the next generation of New Mexicans to be successful requires strong families and strong communities.

**Government should** serve hardworking families, and should invest in our state and communities so our children want to and can live here when they are grown.

**The opposition's** policies weaken families and communities because they put political ideology ahead of what's best for New Mexico.



### Fairness

**We believe** we need *more* fairness in society, the economy, and in government. Individuals, businesses, and government all have a responsibility to do their part and pay their fair share.

**Government should** represent hardworking, everyday New Mexicans – not just those with insider ties. Success should be about how hard you work, not who you know.

**The opposition** serves the well-off and well-connected – not everyday New Mexicans.



### Opportunity

**We believe** everyone – not just those with connections – should have opportunities to *better themselves*, and get a shot at the American Dream to have financial freedom and security.

**Government should** create opportunities for *people who want to work hard*.

**The opposition** puts political ideology ahead of New Mexico's economy. They'd rather protect the big oil and gas interests that fund their campaigns than allow the clean energy industry to thrive here; and they've sold out our schools and small businesses for corporate tax cuts and giveaways.



### Respect

**We believe** everyone needs to respect the law and the law needs to respect everyone. Respecting our diversity, our traditions, and each other – and instilling those values in the next generation – is critical to ensuring our state thrives.

**Government should** reflect New Mexico's basic value of respect for all people.

**The opposition's** policies don't respect the basic dignity of people, or what is special about New Mexico, our land, and our values.

## Language Do's and Don'ts

	More of this...	...Less of that (Note: none of these are terribly bad words and phrases to use, but the alternative is strongly preferred)
Opportunity	We need to create more opportunity for... ...people to better themselves ...hardworking people to get ahead ...people to gain financial freedom	We need to remove obstacles from people's paths
	Too often, hard work and determination isn't enough to succeed in New Mexico.	Too often, New Mexicans have more obstacles than advantages.
Fairness	"More fairness" and "fairer" (e.g. a fairer economy; more fairness in government)	A fair society/economy/government
Respect	Everyone needs to respect the law and the law needs to respect everyone.	<i>Either "everyone needs to respect the law" or "the law needs to respect everyone" without the other</i>
Education	More money to classrooms	More money to the educational system
Jobs	Jobs with decent wages Jobs that let you advance Jobs that let you balance work and family	Good jobs
Poverty	Invest more in programs to reduce poverty across New Mexico	Expand services to people living in poverty
Class	"Working families" and "everyday New Mexicans" are the most universal and inclusive terms "Working and middle classes" also works	Middle class ( <i>by itself</i> ) Low-income workers ( <i>actually associated with welfare</i> )
Less traditionally political language	...regardless of class or background	...regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation
	The well-off and well-connected elites	Big corporations and the wealthy