



Listening Tour Report

April 22- 24, 2015

Alamosa | Conejos | Costilla | Mineral | Rio Grande | Saguache

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	4
Characteristics of Colorado’s San Luis Valley Region.....	5
Culturally Rich	5
Collaborative and Community-Driven	5
Proud.....	5
Cross-Cutting Regional Issues	5
Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services	6
Substance Use Disorders.....	6
Behavioral Health.....	6
Economic Sustainability	7
Poverty	7
Economic Development and Diversity.....	8
Recruiting and Retaining Credentialed Staff.....	9
Infrastructure & Technology	10
Agriculture in the Valley.....	10
Youth Development	10
Job Availability	11
Family Involvement.....	11
Community Engagement and Recreation	11
Strengthening the Education Continuum	12
Early Childhood Care and Education.....	12
Caring for an Aging Population	13
Veterans.....	14
Transportation	14
Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity to Meet Regional Needs	14
Next Steps	15
Appendices.....	16
Appendix A. Listening Tour Itinerary	16
Wednesday, April 22, 2015	16
Thursday, April 23, 2015	16
Friday, April 24, 2015	17
Appendix B: Listening Tour Delegation.....	18
Anschutz Family Foundation.....	18

A.V. Hunter Trust 18

Caring for Colorado Foundation 18

Community Resource Center 18

The Colorado Health Foundation..... 18

The Colorado Trust..... 18

Corporation for National & Community Service 18

El Pomar Foundation..... 18

First Southwest Bank..... 18

Serve Colorado – The Governor’s Commission on Community Service 18

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development 18

Appendix C. Community Hosts & Support 18

 Community Hosts..... 18

 Funder & Government Engagement Steering Committee Support..... 18

Appendix D. Community Meeting Invitees & Attendees 19

 Costilla County 19

 Conejos County 20

 Alamosa County 21

 Mineral County 22

 Rio Grande County 23

 Saguache County..... 24

Appendix E. Characteristics of the San Luis Valley Region 25

Appendix F. Acknowledgments..... 27

 Host Organizations..... 27

 Funder Delegation..... 27

 Steering Committee Members..... 27

Executive Summary

The San Luis Valley Rural Philanthropy Days (SLV RPD) Listening Tour provided for executive level staff from statewide grantmaking foundations an opportunity to learn more about the broad challenges and issues facing Colorado's rural communities. The SLV RPD region is comprised of six counties: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache. The Tour was conducted in preparation for the SLV RPD conference, which is scheduled for September 23-25, 2015 in Creede, Colorado.

Where did we go? The Listening Tour took place on April 22-24, 2015. The delegation visited all six counties within the region, hosting meetings in the communities of San Luis, La Jara, Alamosa, Del Norte, Creede, and Crestone, Colorado. A full itinerary is available in Appendix A.

What did we do? In open discussions, community leaders described the region's character, existing needs, and efforts currently underway to address those needs. Representatives working in the arts and culture, business and economic development, education, agriculture and environment, government, health care, human services, and housing sectors participated.

What did we hear? While there are clear differences among communities in the region, there are also many similarities. A number of participants used the same terms to describe the character of the region and its inhabitants: *culturally wealthy, supportive, committed, collaborative, resourceful, diverse, resilient and proud*. At each stop on the tour, participants spoke of seven common regional needs: substance abuse and behavioral health services, sustainable economies, youth development and engagement, aging populations, veterans' services, transportation, and strengthening nonprofit capacity to meet regional needs.

What is next? Each of the regional needs explored in this report are important and significant. The Listening Tour delegation and representatives from the Steering Committee selected three issues to explore in greater depth at the upcoming SLV RPD conference, given the sufficient groundwork that exists to aid in advancing opportunities for further community collaboration and capacity building. They include:

- 1) *Increasing Access to Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services*
- 2) *Establishing Partnerships to Create Sustainable Year-Long Economies*
- 3) *Creating Opportunities for Youth Development and Engagement*

On September 24, 2015, the second day of the SLV RPD conference, the Steering Committee will convene a gathering of executive directors, topic experts, funders, and state and local government officials to foster collaborative dialogue and opportunities for regional success. Representatives from approximately 20 Colorado foundations will join the discussion on the topic that most resonates with their funding priorities and interests. Participants will identify potential resources and discuss regional successes and challenges, learning from their local counterparts as well as statewide experts and stakeholders. This session will explore vital regional partnerships and opportunities for organizational and community capacity building to better address the identified issues. The sessions are designed to strengthen relationships and encourage dialogue across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. Recommendations will be summarized and added to this report.

Introduction

The purpose of the San Luis Valley Rural Philanthropy Days (SLV RPD) Listening Tour, which took place on April 22-24, 2015, was to provide executive level staff from statewide grantmaking entities an opportunity to learn more about the broad challenges and issues facing Colorado's rural communities. In 2012, during a Rural Funders' Forum hosted by Sue Anschutz-Rodgers, Chair and President of the Anschutz Family Foundation, statewide funders expressed a desire to better understand the region's overarching needs and the actions underway to address these issues prior to attending an RPD conference. The Listening Tour concept was developed as a means to address this information gap so grantmakers would arrive at a RPD conference better prepared to collaborate with nonprofit organizations and local governments to support community needs.

Lindsay Dolce, Executive Director of Serve Colorado—The Governor's Commission on Community Service, chaired the SLV RPD Listening Tour. In addition, senior leaders from Anschutz Family Foundation, A.V. Hunter Trust, Caring for Colorado Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust, Corporation for National and Community Service, El Pomar Foundation, First Southwest Bank, USDA Rural Development, as well as representatives from Community Resource Center and the SLV RPD Steering Committee, attended the tour (Appendix B).

The goal of the Listening Tour was to allow funders to hear from community leaders—in open, candid discussions—about the characteristics of the region, existing needs, and efforts currently underway to address them. Three primary questions were asked at each meeting:

- 1. How would you describe the personality and character of your community?*
- 2. What are the challenges facing your community?*
- 3. What are the successes facing your community?*

In partnership with Community Resource Center, the SLV RPD Steering Committee organized and hosted the Listening Tour with substantial support from the local community, including: Alamosa County, Costilla County Economic Development Office, Town of Creede, Town of Crestone, Town of La Jara, and Rio Grande Hospital (Appendix C). Community leaders working in the arts and culture, business and economic development, education, agriculture and environment, government, health care, and human services were invited (Appendix D). The delegation met with more than 150 people across five meetings, visiting one community in each county, including: San Luis in Costilla County, La Jara in Conejos County, Alamosa in Alamosa County, Creede in Mineral County, Del Norte in Rio Grande County, and Crestone in Saguache County.

This report summarizes the community characteristics, issues, and needs that were heard in these meetings. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all regional characteristics and needs.

Characteristics of Colorado's San Luis Valley Region

Culturally Rich

Listening Tour participants described the San Luis Valley as traditional, historic, multi-cultural, culturally rich and referred to its strong heritage. Despite geographic isolation, the region is proudly home to a wide array of cultural entities including the Creede Repertory Theater, Crestone Music Festival, Fort Garland Museum, and the Stations of the Cross Shrine, among many others. Communities host a variety of events showcasing the rich history of the Valley: Covered Wagon Days in Del Norte, A Taste of Creede in Creede, or Pioneer Day in Manassa. Many ranching and agricultural families have been part of the community for four to five generations; these families are the holders of regional history. Costilla County was the first area of the state of Colorado to be settled through land grants to extend regulation into uninhabited Mexico and has recorded history dating back to the year 1540. Both Costilla and Conejos counties were among the original 17 counties of the State of Colorado. The towns of La Jara, Manassa and Sanford were also settled by Mormon Pioneers in the 1800's. Similarly, the San Luis Valley has a wealth of cultural heritage. Conejos, Costilla, and Saguache counties each have diverse religious and cultural roots. Conejos County is home to the oldest church in Colorado—our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. The Baca Grande near Crestone is a spiritual center with a Hindu temple, a Zen center, a Carmelite monastery, and various Tibetan Buddhist centers. The Town of San Luis recently completed the first phase of a Cultural Heritage Center, and is another example of the deeply rooted value of history and tradition in the Valley. Community leaders throughout the San Luis Valley demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the rich culture that defines the region.

Collaborative and Community-Driven

While the communities of the San Luis Valley are small and often isolated, the residents are highly engaged in community projects that stretch beyond county lines. The opportunity and need for collaboration has grown immensely in recent years and cross-sector collaboration has made a significant impact. Nonprofits, government agencies, and private businesses have come together to assess how they can make a difference in the community through communication, resource sharing, and supporting each other's successes. Diverse groups have partnered to address challenging issues, allowing the community to move forward in a more strategic and sustainable direction.

Proud

The San Luis Valley is the largest high elevation valley in the world, sitting at an elevation of approximately 7,660 feet above sea level. With breathtaking vistas, towering mountains, and the beauty of the valley; no one questions the pride that residents have in their towns and communities. Participants expressed a desire to preserve the quality of life in these family-oriented communities. Those who choose to live in the San Luis Valley are truly passionate about the region and continue to pursue opportunities to be actively engaged and supportive. There is a clear understanding that the fate of one community is dependent on its neighbors; as such, the region has a vested interest in seeing other towns and counties in the region thrive.

For a full list of self-described characteristics, please see Appendix E.

Cross-Cutting Regional Issues

The San Luis Valley is extremely diverse, with a wide range of cultures, religions, beliefs and challenges. Each town is defined by a unique identity and sense of pride. This unique identity and sense of pride creates energy and diversity, but also relies heavily on nonprofit organizations. During the Listening Tour, community leaders voiced a variety of concerns, in addition to opportunities for growth and progress, including: increasing access to substance abuse and behavioral health services; creating opportunities for youth development and engagement; developing sustainable, year-long economies; retaining and supporting an aging population; expanding the availability of resources through transportation; and building the capacity of nonprofit organizations.

Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services

A major theme that emerged in each of the six counties was the need to increase access to substance abuse and behavioral health services in the Valley. There is a definite and measureable connection between the use of addictive, mind altering substances and mental illness.¹ Community leaders throughout the Valley are concerned about the growing use of drugs and alcohol as a means for self-medicating behavioral health issues. Regional collaborations throughout the Valley have formed to address these challenges; however, additional support is needed to assist with combatting this regional challenge.

Substance Use Disorders

Community leaders at each of the six Listening Tour meetings expressed significant concern over the growing presence of mind-altering substances in the Valley. Participants indicated that even in the remote community of Creede, it is possible to find any desired controlled substance that would be available in major metropolitan areas. Despite successes to address this issue in the region, leaders are concerned about the use and abuse of alcohol, marijuana, and other controlled substances across the Valley.

Approximately 7% of deaths in the San Luis Valley are directly related to drug and alcohol use and abuse². The region has seen a significant decrease of prescription drug abuse in the region. In November of 2012, a group of doctors, pharmacists, and law enforcement officials convened to develop a plan to address the growing use of prescription drug usage in the Valley. This regional Prescription Drug Task Force has implemented many successful changes, including establishing a pain contract, requiring patients to file a report to law enforcement if prescriptions are stolen, facilitating shared health and prescription information between pharmacies and providers, and requiring a urine test for some prescriptions to ensure personal use. This task force has significantly reduced the abuse of prescription drugs in the area; however, law enforcement has seen a dramatic increase in the use of heroin. This rise correlates with the decline of prescription drug usage, as heroin is often a less expensive alternative to the costly prescription sedatives. Many attribute the growing availability of heroin to the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, as drug cartels have adjusted to the shift in supply and demand. In 2014, four babies in San Luis Valley hospitals were born with a drug withdrawal syndrome, otherwise known as neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).³ Local task forces have made significant progress in addressing prescription drug abuse; however, more efforts are needed to address the growing usage of other mind-altering substances in the region.

Law enforcement in the Valley expressed concern in the prevalence of opiate use among youth, encountering users as young as eleven. Multi-generation use has contributed to the problem for years, and law enforcement often encounter third-generation opiate users. Saguache County reported increased challenges in addressing under-age marijuana use. Prior to the legalization of marijuana, 11.95%⁴ of students in secondary schools in the Valley reported they had tried marijuana. Since legalization of recreational use, this number has increased to 42.6%.⁵ Use in the previous 30 days among secondary school age students has gone from 13.24% to 23% after the legalization of recreational marijuana. Communicating the dangers of substance abuse to children and teens and combatting multi-generational use is a significant need in each of the six counties.

Behavioral Health

Approximately 4,300 adults and children, 9.2% of the San Luis Valley population, reported poor mental health within the last twelve months. Another 1,820 San Luis Valley residents reported that they did not receive the mental health care that they needed in the same period.⁶ In 2012, 51.6 out of 100,000 residents attempted suicide with 19.7 out of 100,000

¹ The National Bureau of Economic Research

² Alamosa County Coroner's Report, 2012-2013

³ SLV Medical Center

⁴ 2011 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

⁵ Healthy Kids Colorado Survey

⁶ Colorado Health Foundation: 2015 Colorado Health Report Card

committing suicide.⁷ Residents of the San Luis Valley spend approximately 4.6 days per month disregarding their normal activities because their mental status prevents them from doing so.⁸

Although San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group (SLVBHG) has offices in Alamosa, Antonito, Center, La Jara, Monte Vista, and San Luis, SLVBHG struggles to overcome obstacles to providing robust services. These challenges often include recruiting and retaining credentialed staff, the deficiency of in-patient care facilities, transportation to services, and the social stigma associated with behavioral health needs. Many officials throughout the Valley praised SLVBHG for their high quality out-patient care, but expressed a need for an in-patient care facility. Individuals facing behavioral health challenges are frequently incarcerated when hospitals or Front Range in-patient facilities cannot provide adequate services. Additionally, transportation challenges to in-patient or out-patient care prevents many individuals from accessing support. The regional healthcare industry experiences a high turnover in providers, as many use the Valley as platform to gain experience and repay loans before leaving for more lucrative opportunities. Constant changes in providers as well as overworked staff create significant barriers to building trusting relationships between patients and counselors.

Although access to behavioral health services is a widespread concern throughout Valley, many individuals do not receive the treatment needed due to the social stigma associated with mental illness. School counselors are challenged to obtain consent from parents to provide counseling to students who struggle with behavioral health. Those who receive treatment often cannot convene a support system from family and friends due to the lack of recognition by individuals in the community. Providers in the region believe that behavioral health challenges are significantly more prevalent due to the social stigma and the lack of accurate and comprehensive data across the region. Despite the challenges, many communities are proud of the steps that have been made toward improving access to behavioral health services in the region. Costilla County has a new facility, which provides behavioral health services in the county. In Alamosa County, health and human service providers meet regularly to discuss solutions to help families be more successful.

Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability is a concern throughout the Valley; however, the needs vary widely between counties. These concerns include a lack of meaningful employment opportunities, shortage of qualified employees committed to the long-term growth of the community, and the need for economic development and diversity. Each of the six counties seek to create sustainable communities for future generations.

Poverty

The need to combat generational poverty was voiced as a community challenge throughout the region. “Persistent Poverty Counties are described as any county that has had 20% or more of its population living in poverty over the past 30 years, as measured by the 1990, 2000, and 2010 decennial census.⁹ All three of Colorado’s “Persistent Poverty Counties” are located in the San Luis Valley.¹⁰ Furthermore, five of the six counties in the San Luis Valley are considered “Strikeforce” counties by the USDA.¹¹ In Alamosa County, 2,180 households and 21.6% of residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, totaling more than \$6 million in 2014.¹² Many regional successes have helped to provide better quality of life for those living in poverty. For example, the efforts of Connect for Health Colorado to enroll individuals was exceptional. An estimated 83% of people in Alamosa County have health insurance, 39.8% of which have public coverage.¹³

⁷ Colorado Health Information Dataset

⁸ Colorado Department of Public Health

⁹ Community Development Financial Institution Fund

¹⁰ These counties include Alamosa, Costilla and Saguache Counties

¹¹ Alamosa, Costilla, Conejos, Rio Grande and Saguache Counties are considered Strikeforce Counties

¹² Alamosa County Department of Human Services

¹³ American Community Survey

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache	Colorado
Unemployment Rate	11.5%	4.8%	8.6%	1.5%	4.8%	6.1%	4.0%
Poverty Rate	26.5%	19.4%	22.2%	6.4%	19.2%	24.7%	13.2%

Economic Development and Diversity

Across the board, the communities of the San Luis Valley are trying to develop innovative ways to stabilize and diversify the economic landscape. Many communities expressed a need for new creative ideas to boost economic development and diversity throughout the Valley. Although Alamosa and Monte Vista serve as the regional service hubs, smaller communities are striving to decentralize services within the Valley, to grow small businesses on a local level.

Many communities have encouraged the growth of small businesses as a means of economic diversification that takes advantage of a community’s natural assets. Saguache County is working toward the development of small businesses, not franchises, to encourage local spending. Many small communities are challenged to provide variety and options, so many individuals choose to drive to Alamosa or Monte Vista for centralized and more comprehensive services. In order for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive, there must be access to key infrastructure like reliable broadband, which many communities struggle to ensure.

Conversely, the Town of Creede is seeking economic diversification. Mineral County’s economy relies heavily on summer tourism with the average business bringing in 75-90% of their income between June and October.¹⁴ After the West Fork Complex Fire in 2013, many local businesses faced losses between 50-85%.¹⁵ The devastating fire forced many long-time residents of Creede to close businesses in the area. In response to the West Fork Complex Fire, Creede Community Foundation works to develop economic sustainability and security for local business owners. Similarly, communities affected by the fire came together to form the Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team (RWEACT). One of the foci of RWEACT is to minimize the economic effects on businesses. This collaboration has been a significant success in the region by connecting communities and resources across county lines.

Many communities have boosted economies creatively by utilizing readily available, vital resources. Some have capitalized on creativity and a wealth of history while others have collaborated to protect the vast, precious resources that allow tourism to thrive. The Town of Saguache’s Fourth Street Business District was named “Colorado’s Most Endangered Places” in 2009 by Colorado Preservation, Inc. Through the efforts of local community leaders, the Town of Saguache was able to revitalize the local economy and earned the first ever “Endangered Places Program Progress” award in 2015. The Town of Crestone, with a population of just 150, became a Creative Arts District in 2014. Crestone has improved town programs and infrastructure by raising more than \$3 million dollars in grants over the last 10 years (2005-2015). In comparison, grant funding to Crestone between 1985 and 2005 was just \$120,000. Private-public partnerships have also led to success in the region, including the recently renovated Windsor Hotel and Restaurant in Del Norte. Creede has recently become part of the statewide Main Street Initiative, and the Repertory Theater continues to draw tourism from all over the country. Creede has also made significant progress in mining reclamation and rehabilitation. These efforts will preserve the natural resources that draw many tourists to the region for outdoor recreation. Reclamation efforts have led to success across the Valley, as communities work together to preserve natural resources for recreation, tourism, and agriculture. After a study of the Rio Grande in 1998 showed that the river was in serious danger, multiple groups partnered to make significant progress toward restoring the river.¹⁶ The San Luis Valley Get Outdoors Plan is a collaboration between

¹⁴ Creede Community Foundation

¹⁵ Creede Community Foundation

¹⁶ USDA Forest Service & Rocky Mountain Research Station

elected officials, civil servants and community members that have formed a coalition to plan “for the future enhancements and marketing of the San Luis Valley’s amazing recreational resources.”¹⁷ Communities throughout the Valley are working together to reach the long-term goal of achieving economic diversity and sustainability.

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache	Colorado
Labor Force¹⁸	7,291	3,434	1,477	374	5,552	3,121	2,697,500
Unemployment Rate	11.5%	4.8%	8.6%	1.5%	4.8%	6.1%	4.0%
Median Household Income	\$34,520	\$34,526	\$29,145	\$47,083	\$38,993	\$34,600	\$58,433
Average Hourly Wage	\$17.45	\$13.78	\$12.18	\$12.95	\$15.20	\$13.83	\$24.55
Businesses	536	140	84	72	408	169	259,464
Top 5 Employers by County	Alamosa		Conejos		Costilla		
	1. SLV Medical Center Phys. 2. SLV Regional Medical Center 3. Walmart 4. Rakhra Mushroom Farm Corp. 5. Adams State College		1. SLV Health 2. Rocky Mountain Service, Employment & Redevelopment 3. Sanford School District 4. Harborlite Corporation 5. South Conejos School District		1. Centennial High School 2. Blanfort Inc. 3. Sierra Grande School District 4. Centennial School 5. District 30 Schools		
	Mineral		Rio Grande		Saguache		
	1. Creede Repertory Theater 2. 4UR Ranch 3. Mineral County Courthouse 4. Creede Public Schools 5. Creede Fire Department		1. Rio Grande Hospital 2. Monte Vista Co-Op 3. Mountain King Potatoes 4. Juniper Village 5. Colorado State Veterans Center		1. Center High School 2. Mountain Valley School 3. U.S. Forest Service Ranger Station 4. Moffat School 5. Mountain Valley Produce		

Recruiting and Retaining Credentialed Staff

In addition to developing diverse and sustainable economies, communities must also have qualified staff and leadership to provide services. Alamosa and Rio Grande counties noted the challenge of attracting qualified employees who are willing to commit long-term to the community. There is a perception that Alamosa’s geographic isolation from the nexus of higher education providers on the Front Range contributes to the challenge of attracting educated employees. The healthcare industry in the San Luis Valley sees a cyclical pattern of providers who come to the Valley for two to three years to gain experience and repay loans before leaving for a more attractive community or better pay. Furthermore, many of the skilled employees commute to Alamosa from outlying communities within the Valley. Leaders struggle to create a community that attracts families, and cite a lack of community resources, such as community centers or swimming pools, as a deterrent for those looking to relocate. Similarly, communities in the Valley often lack a robust rental market to

¹⁷ Slvgo.org

¹⁸ Colorado Department of Labor

support low-income families. All six counties indicated difficulties with aging infrastructure and a lack of funding to address the problem. This issue often stems from unfunded mandates from the state or federal government, for example the recent need for small communities to update water purification systems within the Valley. Without updated infrastructure, these remote and isolated communities will continue to struggle to attract the needed workforce in the region.

A major asset and success in the Valley is its strong base of nurses. Through a grant from the El Pomar Foundation, the Adam's State University Foundation is able to award scholarships to nursing students in the SLV who plan on remaining in the region long-term. While many communities across Colorado struggle to meet the demand, the San Luis Valley has a strong base of nurses. This innovative partnership between Adams State University and the El Pomar Foundation could be replicated in other industries in the region.

Infrastructure & Technology

The need for public buildings and improved infrastructure was voiced throughout the region. Costilla, Alamosa, Rio Grande and Saguache counties expressed the need for updated drinking water systems; neither Costilla nor Mineral counties have natural gas systems, and many communities in the region lack access to reliable broadband. Poor drinking water infrastructure negatively impacts property values and prevents young families from moving to the area. Communities are working to improve the aging, local infrastructure too. However, like many communities across the state, struggle to meet community needs in addition to un-funded mandates. New regulations often put a heavy burden on new and existing businesses. Costilla County expressed a need for better sidewalks and crosswalks to make the community more accessible for pedestrians. Many communities expressed a desire for a community center as a means to promote community engagement, cultural heritage, and healthy recreational activities.

A common theme throughout the region was the lack of technological infrastructure, specifically a broadband internet network. Businesses throughout the region lack reliable access to high speed internet, which is considered critical to robust economic development. San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative recently began a broadband program, which has expanded from Del Norte to South Fork and is expected to be completed in August of 2015. Outside of the larger towns, there is only wireless, local ISP and some satellite available.

Agriculture in the Valley

The traditional economy in the San Luis Valley is dependent on agriculture; however, the region has experienced a severe drought for 14 of the past 15 years.¹⁹ In turn, water rights pose a significant issue and many communities are concerned about the effect of changing rules and regulations. Additionally, the majority of the abundant, fresh, local food grown in the Valley must leave for other parts of the state, due to a lack of local markets. For example, many communities in the region are considered food deserts because residents must travel more than ten miles to a grocery store or food pantry despite the abundance of agriculture in the region. The Food Bank Network of the San Luis Valley estimates that 16% of San Luis Valley residents faced food insecurity over the last year, with about 44% of the population in the valley having low access to a large grocery store.²⁰

Youth Development

Every community voiced a desire to better engage parents and families in youth development efforts. Leaders wish to create a community where youth thrive. Unfortunately, gaps exist in providing a venue for this to happen. These gaps include the need to strengthen local educational opportunities, foster family support systems, provide opportunities for community engagement and recreation, and create job opportunities for the growing generation.

¹⁹ San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District

²⁰ USDA Food Desert Locator Project

Job Availability

Communities in the San Luis Valley struggle to provide true living wage job opportunities to the next generation. Community leaders hope that youth will graduate from high school, leave the region to obtain a valuable education and then return to their hometowns and find gainful employment. Providing high quality youth services from birth through graduation is increasingly important to ensure an educated and engaged workforce. Unfortunately, the majority of youth are leaving the region for an education and not returning due to a lack of job availability. While building a more skilled workforce, communities must also create an environment that will entice youth to return. This includes livable wages, affordable housing, public transportation, a year-round economy, and a culture of success and growth that allows middle class families the opportunity to thrive. To ensure success, communities also voiced a need for more mentorship and internship programs and opportunities to build interpersonal and professional skills.

Family Involvement

Participants of the Listening Tour described their communities as great places to raise a family; however, these leaders are also concerned that some parents lack skills or are not strongly engaged in raising children. Often parents are not present due to long work hours, substance abuse, or imprisonment. Some of these high-need situations are not captured or supported by current programs in some areas of the Valley, and the judicial system must be creative in meeting the needs of these families. Additionally, the child poverty rate in the San Luis Valley is extremely high and many parents work low-wage jobs to support their families, which prevents them from being actively engaged. Many programs exist in the Valley that focus on providing skills for youth; however, few programs exist to provide parents the necessary tools to raise youth. The San Luis Valley is in need of comprehensive services to assist at-risk families in the region.

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache	Colorado
Free & Reduced Lunch	71.2%	60.9%	86.0%	61.3%	61.0%	83.4%	41.9%
Under 18 in Poverty	32.6%	34.5%	38.9%	20.4%	32.3%	47.1%	41.9%

Community Engagement and Recreation

Community leaders are pursuing opportunities to further engage youth and provide healthy and meaningful recreation. Educators work to provide resources to youth, specifically as a means to decrease drug usage. These educators often lack the resources to provide these much needed healthy recreational opportunities. In 2008, the Boys and Girls Club satellite campuses in Monte Vista and La Jara closed due to a lack of financial stability. Programs have emerged to replace the Boys and Girls Club, but they are run on a volunteer basis with limited resources. With rising levels of obesity and drug use and abuse in the region, leaders seek better ways to provide structured, healthy after-school activities in the region, especially for high school aged students. Current after school programs must be very creative and are often stretched thin. The track coach at Centennial High School in San Luis indicated that the track team lacks the proper equipment for training. Students travel to competitions very early in the morning to have the opportunity to practice on quality regulation equipment before competing. Additionally, many of the students do not have warm-up suits for practices. After this challenge was identified, one community leader suggested we send around a signup sheet to participants in the room to purchase warm-up suits for the track team. As a result of the Listening Tour, participants of the Costilla County meeting worked together to purchase warm-up uniforms for the entire track team.

Communities are similarly concerned about a lack of civic engagement and volunteerism from the next generation. One major success in Costilla County is the Move Mountains Project, which launched in 2014 as a method to engage youth in civic engagement as well as provide a safe location for youth development and recreation in the community. Through this program, 51 youth worked with community leaders, senior citizens and volunteers to learn about entrepreneurship, art, earth, and community action. Two memorable, youth-driven projects include: 1) a mural on the San Luis city building, and

2) identification by youth for a community building. Similar efforts have taken root across the region, but additional support and resources are needed to expand impact and opportunities in each of the communities of the San Luis Valley.

Strengthening the Education Continuum

A common desire throughout the valley was for students to “leave to return”. Unfortunately, many children in the community are at an educational disadvantage. Graduation rates in Costilla County are at 92.9%; however, educators are concerned that students are graduating unprepared for higher education. Costilla County also sees a strong need to develop “place based curriculum” to help educate children about the rich heritage of the region. School infrastructure varies across the valley. Del Norte and Creede both have new, high quality facilities, but lack the ability to fund books, computers, and other key tools and resources. Similarly, districts are challenged to attract well-qualified teachers or provide competitive pay. The majority of the Valley is on a four-day school week, which has been a considerable budgetary savings but affects the quality of education for students and creates a strain on teachers and curriculum development. School attendance is declining in the region, with many students opting to utilize online programs in place of traditional education systems. Alamosa County cited its greatest challenge as catering to the needs of students with varying skill levels. Generational poverty also poses a major challenge to educators, who often work to inspire first generation high school graduates. Many communities emphasized the need to grow mentorship programs to target at-risk youth and provide a support network that may not be available at home. Additional resources are needed for youth who have social and emotional issues that are beyond the scope of services that schools can offer. One suggested solution was creating a mentoring and internship program.

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache	Colorado
School Aged Population (5-17)	2,779	1,717	535	33	2,159	987	916,696
Kindergarteners Full-Day	100%	100%	100%	100%	76.3%	100%	70.3%
4th Graders NOT Proficient in Reading	30.0%	30.9%	56.1%	LNE	43.5%	27.7%	32.0%
High School Graduation Rate	83.1%	93.0%	92.9%	100%	77.5%	73.2%	76.9%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	24.2%	19.1%	19.5%	39.3%	20.3%	23.8%	37.0%
Public School Enrollment	2,388	1,601	281	78	2,063	871	876,999
Student-Teacher Ratio (Public)	15:1	13:1	13:1	6:1	13:1	8:1	18:1

Early Childhood Care and Education

With 16 childcare centers and 21 licensed family childcare centers in the San Luis Valley, providers struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff due to low wages.²¹ Childcare centers need to expand to meet the needs of families in the region, but do not have the financial capacity to do so. Rio Grande, Conejos, and Costilla counties expressed the need for

²¹ Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley

additional licensed childcare providers, especially for infant care. In Costilla County, there are 6 Early Head Start spots, with an additional 7-10 children on the waiting list. Conejos County has one licensed childcare provider and no infant care centers. The Creede Early Learning Center is an example of success in the region since coming back from closure in 2009. The childcare center currently enrolls 14 children with a maximum capacity of 15. Access to quality early childhood care and education is integral to future success.

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache	Colorado
Young Child Population (<5)	1,166	616	167	28	736	415	337,626
ECE License Capacity	627	256	149	25	585	333	219,560
Number of Children Served	605	208	87	16	548	310	69,107
Licensed Child Care Centers	4	1	2	1	3	5	2,841
Licensed Family Child Care	6	2	0	0	12	1	2,654
Average monthly Cost of Child Care Center	\$392.40	N/A	\$519.60	\$519.60	N/A	\$348.80	\$852.00
Average Monthly Cost of Family Child Care	\$503.36	\$339.18	N/A	N/A	\$381.45	\$408.65	\$651.17
Average Monthly Cost of Infant Care	\$584.55	\$368.05	\$519.60	N/A	\$470.25	\$541.25	\$377.86

Caring for an Aging Population

Throughout the Valley, younger generations are leaving in pursuit of higher education or employment opportunities. Unfortunately, they are also leaving behind an aging generation without adequate elderly care. The gaps in service are expansive, including a shortage of accessible sidewalks, public transportation, affordable housing, and healthcare. Due to this lack of services, some elderly are forced to leave their communities. Currently, Alamosa, La Jara and Monte Vista have assisted living facilities within the community. Although Alamosa has an assisted living facility, it is cost prohibitive for many elderly individuals. In Mineral County where the median age is 60.8, the biggest deterrent to building a senior housing or assisted living center is the cost of construction in the remote community.²² The Town of Crestone has pursued initiatives to create a senior community that would enable the elderly to remain as long as possible. In the past, a private transportation system existed between communities; however, it was found to be economically unsustainable. A mix of private and public communal transportation throughout the region is needed to allow for more independence among the senior populations. There is a significant need to improve the infrastructure and care network for the aging, and an

²² U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 Census Data

immediate need to expand home healthcare services. In these rural communities, service providers struggle to meet the senior’s desire to “age in place”.

Veterans

Costilla, Conejos, and Mineral counties each expressed a need for additional consolidated services for military veterans. Veterans encompass close to 8% of the population in the Valley, but many must leave the region to access services on the Front Range or in Albuquerque. Transportation poses a challenge, especially for veterans who must travel to Alamosa for regular appointments. American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars are working together to upgrade the current veterans facility in San Luis. The current building was built in the 1930s, and hasn’t been remodeled since the 1960s. The proposed venue will provide opportunities for intergenerational programming, community meals, and meeting space. Despite the challenges, the Valley is optimistic about the expanding opportunities for veterans in region.

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache	Colorado
Veteran Population	1,121	502	445	111	1,000	521	399,458

Transportation

Each of the six counties expressed a need for reliable, regional transportation. With high levels of poverty in the San Luis Valley, many families, veterans, students, and elderly lack reliable transportation. By offering transportation from the smaller communities to Alamosa, a wide range of opportunities for individuals to seek jobs and resources opens. This lack of transportation also effects the availability of higher education for many college-age students in the region. In the past, a private company offered transportation services in the Valley; however, the model was not financially sustainable. Although transportation doesn’t solve all of the problems regarding access to services, transportation opens up resources to a widely dispersed community.

Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity to Meet Regional Needs

Many nonprofit staff struggle with the capacity to develop sustainable nonprofit organizations, which provide vital services throughout the region. Nonprofit organizations feel as though they are stretching the local donation base too thin, and are not prepared to access other funding sources. Communities expressed the need to increase local capacity to write and manage grants in order to be competitive with other entities vying for limited funding. Many communities face an additional challenge of leadership fatigue. A major success in the region is the local food bank, which was constructed entirely without the use of outside funding. The Food Bank Warehouse was a collaboration between local businesses, elected officials and La Puente Home, Inc., a nonprofit organization serving the region. Alamosa County Commissioner, Darius Allen, led the way to replace a condemned warehouse used by the Food Bank Network of the San Luis Valley. In partnership with the Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation, construction businesses, and the public works office to build the new \$250,000 warehouse, which would be shared with a Public Health Initiative. This collaborative effort met the Food Bank Network’s immediate need for food storage as well as regulations required to distribute USDA commodities.²³ Mineral County has 18 registered nonprofit organizations that provide a significant amount of value beyond the capacity of government entities. Nonprofit organizations ask a lot of the community, but also give back in significant ways.

²³ Gena Akers, La Puente, Inc.

	Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla	Mineral	Río Grande	Saguache	SLV Total
Nonprofit Public Charities	119	50	31	18	143	69	430
Total # of Grants Awarded in 2014 by the 12 Core RPD Funders	38	2	2	4	9	7	63
Total \$ of Grants Awarded in 2014 by the 12 Core RPD Funders	\$1,186,684	\$12,500	\$12,000	\$197,419	\$219,500	\$262,451	\$1,890,54
Total # of Grants Awarded between 2009 and 2014 by the 12 Core RPD Funders	300	44	28	31	72	47	552
Total \$ of Grants Awarded between 2009 and 2014 by 12 Core RPD Funders	\$11,923,455	\$492,169	\$271,964	\$478,669	\$1,369,126	\$660,561	\$15,195,994

Next Steps

Each of the regional needs explored in this report are important and significant. The SLV RPD Funder and Government Engagement Subcommittee selected three issues to explore in greater depth at the upcoming SLV RPD conference, given the sufficient groundwork that exists to aid in advancing opportunities for further community collaboration and capacity building. They include:

- 1) Increasing Access to Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services*
- 2) Establishing Partnerships to Create Sustainable Year-Long Economies*
- 3) Creating Opportunities for Youth Development and Engagement*

On September 24, 2015, the second day of the SLV RPD conference, the Steering Committee will convene a gathering of executive directors, topic experts, funders, and state and local government officials to foster collaborative dialogue and opportunities for regional success. Representatives from approximately 20 Colorado foundations will join the discussion on the topic that most resonates with their funding priorities and interests. Participants will identify potential resources and discuss regional successes and challenges, learning from their local counterparts as well as statewide experts and stakeholders. This session will explore vital regional partnerships and opportunities for organizational and community capacity building to better address the identified issues. The sessions are designed to strengthen relationships and encourage dialogue across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. Recommendations will be summarized and added to this report.

Appendices

Appendix A. Listening Tour Itinerary

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Travel to San Luis from Denver

12:00 - 2:00 PM - Listening Tour with Costilla County

- Host: Economic Development Office
- Contact: Bob Rael, Executive Director
- Location: Economic Development Office
- Address: 401 S. Church Place, San Luis, CO 81152

2:00 - 3:30 PM - Travel to La Jara (45 minutes)

3:30 - 5:30 PM - Listening Tour with Conejos County

- Host: Town of La Jara
- Contact: Larry Zaragoza, Mayor
- Location: Senior Citizen's Center
- Address: 413 Main Street, La Jara, CO 81140

6:30 - 8:30 PM Steering Committee Reception

Thursday, April 23, 2015

7:00 – 8:00 AM Breakfast @ Hotel

8:30 - 10:30 AM Listening Tour with Alamosa County

- Host: Alamosa County
- Contact: Mariann Dunne, County Commissioner
- Location: Alamosa County Building
- Address: 8900-A Independence Way, Alamosa, CO 81101

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM – Travel to Creede (90 minutes)

12:30 - 2:30 PM – Listening Tour with Mineral County

- Host: City of Creede
- Contact: Mayor Eric Grossman, Mayor
- Location: Kip's Grill
- Address 101 E 5th St., Creede, CO 81130 (5th and Main Street)
- Lunch will be provided

2:30 - 4:00 PM – Travel to Del Norte (45 minutes)

4:00 - 6:00 PM – Listening Tour with Rio Grande County

- Host: Rio Grande Hospital
- Contact: Arlene Harms, Chief Executive Officer
- Location: Rio Grande County Annex Building
- Address: 965 6th Street, Del Norte, CO 81132

6:00 - 8:00 PM – Dinner @ Three Barrel Brewing, 475 Grand Avenue, Del Norte, CO 81132

Friday, April 24, 2015

8:00 - 9:30 AM – Travel to Crestone (1 hour, 15 minutes)

9:30 - 11:30 AM – Listening Tour with Saguache County

- Host: Town of Crestone
- Contact: Mayor Kairina Danforth, Mayor
- Location: Desert Sage Restaurant
- Address: 242 Baca Town House, Crestone, CO 81131

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM – Listening Tour Debrief and Lunch

- Location: Crestone Community Building
- Address: 250 North Cottonwood, Crestone, CO 81131

1:00 - 4:30 PM – Travel to Denver (3 hours, 30 minutes)

Appendix B: Listening Tour Delegation

Anschutz Family Foundation
Kumella Aiu, Program Officer

A.V. Hunter Trust
Barbara Howie, Executive Director

Caring for Colorado Foundation
Randy Evetts, Senior Program Officer

Community Resource Center
Maria Fabula, Chief Executive Officer
Leah Rausch, RPD Program Manager
Amanda Barlow, RPD Program Coordinator
Ricky Green, AmeriCorps VISTA

The Colorado Health Foundation
Amy Latham, Portfolio Director – Health Care & Health Coverage

The Colorado Trust
Arden Trewartha, Community Partner

Corporation for National & Community Service
Dan Dunlap, State Director

El Pomar Foundation
Noel Roberts, Program Officer

First Southwest Bank
Jeni R. Jack-Goodwin, President
Delzia Worley, Senior Lender

Serve Colorado – The Governor’s Commission on
Community Service
Delegation Chair – Lindsay Dolce, Executive Director

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development
Pattie Snidow, Community and Economic Development
Director

Appendix C. Community Hosts & Support

Community Hosts

Costilla County
Bob Rael
Economic Development Office

Conejos County
Larry Zaragoza
Town of La Jara

Alamosa County
Mariann Dunne
Alamosa County

Mineral County
Eric Grossman
City of Creede

Rio Grande County
Arlene Harms
Rio Grande Hospital

Saguache County
Kairina Danforth
Town of Crestone

Funder & Government Engagement Steering Committee Support

Gena Akers
La Puente, Inc.

Katherine Brown
Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

Lupita Garcia
Energy Resource Center

Eric Grossman
City of Creede

Paula Medina
Center for Restorative Programs

Cathy Morin
RiGHT

Guinevere Nelson Freer
Willow Creek Reclamation

Jan Oen
Valley Community Fund

Ashley Riley Lopes
Tu Casa

Elizabeth Zurn
City of Creede

Appendix D. Community Meeting Invitees & Attendees

Costilla County

Carlos Atencio

Teacher, Farmer, Artist

Dolores Burnes

County Commissioner
Costilla County

Judy Burrell

Community Member
B&W Enterprises

Diana Cortez

Superintendent
Centennial School District R-1

Charlene Gallegos

Mayor
San Luis

Iva Gallegos

Writer/Owner
Costilla County Free Press

Joe Gallegos

County Commissioner
Costilla County

Vivian Gallegos

Head Nurse
Costilla County Nursing Service

Curtis Garcia

Principal
Centennial School District R-1

Sharon Gibson

President
Fort Garland Revitalization

Thomas Gilmore

Regional Council Member
El Pomar Foundation

Mike Gomez

Executive Director
Mariachi San Luis

Eugene Jaquez

Sangre de Cristo Ace

Bernadette Lucero

Executive Director
Cooperative

Dana Maestas

Writer
Jacales Fine Art

Norman Maestas

President
Land Right Council

Tomas Maestas

Director
Fort Garland Community Center

Rick Manzanares

Emeritus
Costilla County Economic Development
Council

Marie Martinez

Writer/Owner
La Sierra Newspaper

Anita McDaniel

Director
Fort Garland Museum

Amos Medina

Sherriff
Costilla County Sherriff's Department

Olympia Medina

President
Costilla County Senior Citizen Council

Brandon Mizokami

Principal
Sierra Grande School District R-30

Alfred Mondragon

Fire Chief
Costilla County Fire Protection District

Lawrence Pacheco

County Commissioner
Costilla County

Jackie Prator

Land Owner/Mesita

Randy Pijoan

Secretary
Costilla County Economic Development
Council

Robert Rael

Executive Director
Costilla County Economic Development
Council

Felix Romero

President
Costilla County Economic Development
Council

Ryan Rose

Development Facilitator

Sandra Santa Cruz

Executive Director
Canto Al Pueblo Cultural Arts

Frances Santisteven

Rancher, San Acacio

Myrri Smith

Mayor
Town of Blanca quia Association

Juan Trujillo

Post Commander
American Legion Post 142

Delmer Vialpando

President
Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association

Conejos County

Aaron Abeyta
Instructor
Adams State College

Hoyt Anderson
Business Owner
La Jara Trading Post

Michael Armenta
Project Coordinator
Conejos County Clean Water

Gary Bailey
Mayor
Town of Sanford

Joseph Baroz
Business Owner
Baroz Servica

Robert Chavez
President/ CEO
Guadalupe Credit Union

Mack Crowther
Treasurer
Conejos County

Bobby Cummings
Trustee
Town of La Jara

Kevin Edgar
Superintendent
Sanford School District

Paul Faucette
Business Owner
Colorado Catch

Lawrence Gallegos
County Administrator
Conejos County

Howard Galvez
Sherriff
Conejos County

Mitchell Jarvies
County Commissioner
Conejos County

Naomi Keys
County Assessor
Conejos County

Scott Kreps
Business Owner
Sanford Country Store

Tressessa Martinez
Administrator
Conejos County

Steve McCarroll
County Commissioner
Conejos county

Brad McCarroll
Business Owner
McCarroll Trucking

Orlando Gallardo
Veterans Service Officer
Conejos County

Demetrio Valdez
Business Owner
Valdez Demetrio

Ann Marie Velazquez
Director
Chamber of Commerce

Kasey Russell
President
Community Banks

Lucas Salazar
Business Owner
Salazar Natural Meats

John Sandoval
County Commissioner
Conejos County

Michelle Trujillo
Principal
Conejos County School District

Austin Valdez
Trustee
Town of La Jara Chamber of Commerce

Kelly Gallegos
Administrator
Conejos County Hospital

Val Finnigan
Regional Council Member
El Pomar Foundation

Alamosa County

Russell Achatz
President
Alamosa State Bank

Darius Allen
County Commissioner
Alamosa County

Robert Alejo
Superintendent
Alamosa School District

Jim Belknap
IT Director
City of Alamosa

Heinz Bergann
Director of Parks & Rec
City of Alamosa

Charlotte Bobicki
Area Representative
Senator Bennet

Heather Brooks
City Manager
City of Alamosa

Duane Bussey
President/ CEO
SLV Federal Bank

Keith Cerney
Publisher
The Valley Courier

Don Chapman
Fire Chief
City of Alamosa

Christina Daniel
Chief Operating Officer
SLV Behavioral Health

Gigi Darricades
President/ CEO
Valley Wide Health Services

Toni DeAngelis
Director of Development
Trinidad Junior College

Kristy Duarte
Captain
Alamosa County Sherriff's Department

Sarah Duncan Pearce
Director
Department of Public Health

Marianne Dunne
County Commissioner
Alamosa County

Brenda Felmlee
Area Representative
Congressman Tipton

Sandra Hostetter
County Assessor
Alamosa County

Dennis Hunt
Administrator
Alamosa County

Josef Lucero
Mayor
City of Alamosa

Konni Martin
Chief Executive Officer

James Martinez
Senior Services
Department of Human Services

Frank Muniz
Service Officer
Department of Veterans Affairs

Duane Oakes
Chief of Police
City of Alamosa

Jan Oen
Coordinator
Valley Community Fund

Jill Pascoe
Program Supervisor
Alamosa County

Laurie Rivera
Deputy Director
Department of Human Services

Catherine Salazar
Director
Department of Human Services

Whitney Shaw
Public Health Director
Alamosa County

Brady Stagner
Superintendent
Sangre de Cristo

Pat Steenburg
Director
Department of Public Works

Beverly Strnad
Nurse
Department of Public Health

Dr. David Svaldi
President
Adams State University

Roni Wisdom
Chief Financial Officer
San Luis Valley Medical Center

Michael Wisdom
Director
SLV Development Resources Group

Michael Yohn
County Commissioner
Alamosa County

Mineral County

Charleen Ameal
Board Member
Virginia Christensen Trust

Catherine Augur
Executive Director
Creede Reparatory Theater

Della Brown
Executive Director
Chamber of Commerce

Ron Carpenter
Board Member
Virginia Christensen Trust

Clyde Dooley
Town Manager
Town of Creede

Don Dustin
Volunteer
Search & Rescue

Heather DeLonga
Founder
Creede Athletics

Damon Gibbons
School Board Member
Creede School District

Eric Grossman
Mayor
Town of Creede

Eloise Hooper
Arts & Recreation Representative
Mineral County Fairgrounds

Don Hollenshead
County Commissioner
Mineral County

Fred Hoseljuss
Sheriff's Office
Mineral County

John Howard
School Board Member
Creede School District

Jenny Inge
Board Member
Virginia Christensen Trust

Caitlin Jewell
Creede Community Foundation
Executive Director

Lauri Jordan
Town Planning & Zoning
Town of Creede

Catherine Kim
Town Trustee
Town of Creede

Janelle Kukuk
County Administrator
Mineral County

Scott Lamb
County Commissioner
Mineral County

Randy McClure
General Manager
Rio Grande Silver, Inc.

Rita Odom
President
Ladies Aid

Chuck Powers
Chair
Creede Mining Heritage Inc.

Ian Romo
Board President
Chamber of Commerce

Bob Seago
Board Member
Mineral County Health Council

Randi Snead
Town Clerk
Town of Creede

Buck Stroh
School Superintendent
Creede School District

Jenny Vanry
Administrative Director
Creede Early Learning Center

Ramona Weber
County Commissioner
Mineral County

Debbie Whitmore
Board President
Creede Arts Council

Elizabeth Zurn
Mayor Pro-Tem
Town of Creede

Rio Grande County

Tom Acres

Manager

Town of South Fork

Annette Archuleta

Trustee

Town of Del Norte

Joe Archuleta

Pastor

New Life Fellowship Church

Bonnie Asplin

Development Officer

Rio Grande Hospital

Marty Asplin

Co- Director

Upper Rio Grants Economic Dev. Council

Adrienne Atencio

Executive Director

High Valley Community Center

Katherine Bailey

Development Director

Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

Suzanne Benton

Financial Officer

Rio Grande County

Pam Bricker

Commissioner

Rio Grande County

Emily Brown

Director

Rio Grande County Public Health Dept.

TJ Brown

Vice President

Del Norte Bank

Bob Bryning

President

South Fork Chamber of Commerce

Jim Clare

Manager

San Luis Valley Landfill

Joel Condren

President

South Fork Chamber of Commerce

Doug Davie

Commissioner

Rio Grande County

Shon Davis

Chief Operating Officer

San Luis Valley Federal Bank

Carol Lee Dugan

Director

Carnegie Library System

Pat Fluck

Trustee

Town of South Fork

Debbie Garcia

Mayor

City of Monte Vista

Kay Harmon

President

Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce

Arlene Harms

Chief Executive Officer

Rio Grande Hospital

Jerry Hixon

Trustee

South Fork Town Board

Loren Howard

Chief Executive Officer

SLV Rural Electrical Co-Op

Mike Hurst

President

Del Norte Bank

Gary Johnson

Board President

Vali 3 Theater Board

Mark Jones

Certified Account Executive

Mark Jones Architecture

Cheryl Jones- Seneff

Owner

San Luis Valley Rural Electrical Co-Op

Will Kreutzer

President

Del Norte Chamber of Commerce

Nancy Lee

Marketing Director

Town of South Fork

Bernadette Martinez

Administrator

Town of Del Norte

Forrest Neurerberg

City manager

City of Monte Vista

Carol Lee Osborn

Administrator

Rio Grande County

Jim Poston

President

Monte Vista Comm. Development Corp.

Kit Salway

President

South Fork Community Foundation

Nancy Schrader

Development Officer

Rio Grande Hospital

Karla Shriver

Commissioner

Rio Grande County

Don Spencer

Trustee

South Fork Town Board

Scott Stecken

Board Member

South Fork Music Association

Regan Whitehead

Co-Owner

Windsor Hotel

Saguache County

Jason Anderson
Commissioner
Saguache County

Jen Anderson
Commissioner
Saguache County

Diane Bairstow
Trustee
Town of Crestone

Kirk Banghart
Superintendent
Moffat School District #2

Matthew Crowley
Chairman
Crestone Spiritual Alliance

Kairina Danforth
Mayor
Town of Crestone

Rose DeHerrera
Manager
Town of Center

Tom Dessain
Executive Director
Crestone Performances Inc.

Mary Engquist
Trustee
Town of Saguache

Christopher Garcia
Trustee
Town of Center

Therese Garcia
Clerk
Town of Saguache

Terry Gillette
Business Owner
Gillette Trading Post

John Grotenhuis
Trustee
Town of Crestone

Christine Gydesen
Founder
Historic Ute Theater

Michael Hayes
Director
Crestone Charter School

Elaine Johnson
President
Crestone Area Business Alliance

Joel Johnson
Trustee
Town of Saguache

Adam Kinney
Trustee
Town of Crestone

Sarah Koehn-Frey
Director
Northern Saguache County Library

Kizzen Laki
Editor
Crestone Eagle Newspaper

Tim Lovato
Commissioner
Saguache County

Geraldine Martinez
Trustee
Town of Center

Mary McClure
Trustee
Town of Center

Greg Mills
President
Aventa Credit Union

Brian Morgan
Mayor & Trustee
Town of Moffat

Faith O'Reilly
President
Saguache Chamber of Commerce

Julio Paez
Trustee
Town of Center

Lonny Roth
Mayor Pro-Tem
Town of Crestone

Adeline Sanchez
Mayor Pro-Tem
Town of Center

Pedro Segura
Trustee
Town of Center

Herman Sisneros
Mayor
Town of Center

Mark Talbot
Trustee
Town of Crestone

Akia Tanara
Administrator
Town of Crestone

Kate Vasha
Mayor Pro-Tem
Town of Saguache

Greg Terrell
Mayor
Town of Saguache

Andrew Virdin
Trustee
Town of Saguache

Burt Wadman
Director
Crestone Creative District

Linda Warsh
Director
Saguache County Social Services

Dan Warwick
Sherriff
Saguache County

Appendix E. Characteristics of the San Luis Valley Region

Alamosa	Conejos	Costilla
Beautiful	Amazing Youth	Agriculture
Caring	Care About Each Other	Beautiful
Close Knit	Comfortable	Cautious of Outsiders
Cohesive	Cultural Community	Culturally Dynamic and Rich
Collaborative	Diverse	Dedicated to Restoration
Commitment	Diverse Culture	Diverse
Connectedness	Diverse Traditions	Dynamic
Constant Growth	Easy to Get Involved	Ever Growing & Strong, Family
Cooperation	Empowered Youth	Oriented
Creative	Enthusiastic	Extremely Resilient
Culturally Wealthy	Everyone Helps Each Other	Family-Oriented
Diverse	Friendly	Filled with Youth Leaders
Extremely Collaborative	Good Sense of Security	Friendly
Family	Great Heritage	Full of Music
Hardworking	Great Place to Live	Green
Help Each Other	Great place to raise family	Growing
High Values, may not have money	Helpful	Helpful
Neighborly	Heritage	History
Passionate	Lots of History with Farming	Hispanic
Proud	Mutual Aid	Indigenous Community
Resilient	Open	Inspiring
Resourceful	Opportunities to get Involved	Leaders
Solution-Seeking	People are Open	Legacy
Supportive	People Care about People	Living Tradition
Tradition	Proud	Mixed
Wide-Open Vistas	Quiet	Musical
	Rich Agricultural Heritage	Passionate
	Rich History Among Subsets of Community	Pride
	Safe	Resilient
	Secure	Rich and Rejuvenating
	Strong Families	Rural
	Strong Heritage	Self-reliant
	Tight-Knit	Spiritual
	Underserved and Under-represented	Strong Leaders
	Unique	Tight-knit Community
	Volunteer-Oriented	Tri-cultural
	Wonderful	Unique culture
	Youth are Greatest Resource	Value History
	Youth are a Supported Asset	Very Ancient Infrastructure
		Very Strong
		Very Unique in History
		Youth Leaders

Mineral	Rio Grande	Saguache
Close-knit	Aging Population	Agricultural
Community-minded	Business & Recreational Growth	Artistic Community Austere
Creative and Inventive	Changing	Authentic
Culture	Close-knit	Aversion to Anyone Telling us what to do
Depp Roots	Collaboration	Broadly Talented
Entrepreneurial	Diverse	Caring
Family	Expansion	Community-Driven
Friendly	Family Oriented	Dedication
Full of Love	Future Lies in Our Past	Diverse
Fun	Generational	Eclectic
Fun Place	Growing	Economic Challenged
Generous	Hardworking	Extremely Poor
Hard Working	Have it all	Fractious
Historic	Hidden Gem	Full Colorado
Inventive	Historic	Growing Rapidly
Mining History	Huge Potential	Hard Working
Resilient	Key to our Future Lies in Past	Highly Engaged
Rugged Spirit	Moving Forward	Hungry for more Art & Entertainment & Development
Small Town – Big Family	On the Verge and We have it all Here	Individualistic
Special Place	Opportunities	Intelligent
Tenacious	Optimistic	Involved in the Outdoors
Value-Centric	Outdoorsy	Low Wages
	Partnership	Loyalty
	Pioneering	Materially Poor and Broadly, Creatively Talented
	Potential	Melting Pot
	Progressive	Multicultural
	Recreation Summer Destination	Poor
	Reinventing Self	Ranching Refreshingly Authentic
	Revitalizing	Resourceful
	The Future is in Healthcare	Simple & Beautiful
	Thriving	Small
	Tourist-Driven	Stubborn
	Traditional	Tenacious
	Unlimited Potential	Underserved
	Welcoming	
	Willing	

Appendix F. Acknowledgments

THANK YOU to all those who dedicated their time and efforts in supporting the 2015 San Luis Valley Listening Tour.

Host Organizations	Funder Delegation	Steering Committee Members
<p>Bob Rael <i>Economic Development Office</i></p>	<p>Lindsay Dolce, Delegation Chair <i>Serve Colorado – The Governor’s Commission on Community Service</i></p>	<p>Cathy Morin, Co-Chair <i>RiGHT</i></p>
<p>Lary Zaragoza <i>Town of La Jara</i></p>	<p>Kumella Aiu <i>Anschutz Family Foundation</i></p>	<p>Guinevere Nelson Freer, Co-Chair <i>Willow Creek Reclamation</i></p>
<p>Mariann Dunne <i>Alamosa County</i></p>	<p>Dan Dunlap <i>Corporation for National & Community Service</i></p>	<p>Gena Akers, FGE Committee Chair <i>La Puente, Inc.</i></p>
<p>Eric Grossman <i>City of Creede</i></p>	<p>Randy Evetts <i>Caring for Colorado Foundation</i></p>	<p>Katherine Bailey <i>Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust</i></p>
<p>Arlene Harms <i>Rio Grande Hospital</i></p>	<p>Barbara Howie <i>A.V. Hunter Trust</i></p>	<p>Lupita Garcia <i>Energy Resource Center</i></p>
<p>Kairina Danforth <i>Town of Crestone</i></p>	<p>Jeni R. Jack-Goodwin <i>First Southwest Bank</i></p>	<p>Eric Grossman <i>City of Creede</i></p>
	<p>Amy Latham <i>The Colorado Health Foundation</i></p>	<p>Paula Medina <i>Center for Restorative Programs</i></p>
	<p>Noel Roberts <i>El Pomar Foundation</i></p>	<p>Jan Oen <i>Valley Community Fund</i></p>
	<p>Pattie Snidow <i>U.S.D.A. Rural Development</i></p>	<p>Ashley Riley Lopes <i>Tu Casa</i></p>
	<p>Arden Trewartha <i>The Colorado Trust</i></p>	<p>Elizabeth Zurn <i>City of Creede</i></p>
	<p>Delzia Worley <i>First Southwest Bank</i></p>	