



LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

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DIEGO ESPINOZA:

BUILDING TRUST, GROWING LEADERS, AND MOVING NEW MEXICO FORWARD

PRESIDENT, LEADERSHIP NEW MEXICO



For Diego Espinoza, leadership isn't about a title—it's about responsibility, integrity, and service to community. As President of Leadership New Mexico, Diego is at the helm of one of the state's most influential leadership development organizations, shaping the future by empowering those ready to lead it.

Rooted in the cultural values of New Mexico—family, humility, community connection, and hard work—Diego brings an authentic and steady presence to the work of leadership development. “I’ve always believed that trust is the foundation for building stronger communities,” he shares. “And I feel a responsibility to do things the right way for the people and places I care about.”

FROM MORIARTY TO MISSION-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

Diego Espinoza is a proud native New Mexican, born in Las Vegas and raised in Moriarty. A standout athlete at Moriarty High School, he graduated in 2001 holding the school record in the 100-meter dash before earning a Bachelor of Arts in Physical Education

with a minor in Spanish from Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU), where he competed on a track and field scholarship. Diego became the first in his family to earn a college degree, paving the way for future generations.

While at ENMU, Diego was appointed by Governor Bill Richardson as the first Hispanic student to serve on the Board of Regents. His leadership extended to founding ENMU's chapter of Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc., the nation's first Latino fraternity, and launching the Latino Leadership Summit, connecting minority students with college resources, scholarships, and financial aid. His efforts earned him recognition as ENMU's Hispanic Student of the Year in 2006.

Following graduation, Diego served as Community Outreach Director for Congresswoman Heather Wilson, connecting New Mexico communities with critical resources and fostering civic engagement across the state.

His ability to build trust and form meaningful partnerships laid the foundation for his leadership journey. Transitioning to the private sector, Diego excelled as a private aviation consultant, managing over \$100 million in annual sales to the federal government over a 12-year career. His experience in high-stakes negotiations and strategic planning solidified his reputation as a results-driven leader who simplifies complex challenges to achieve clear outcomes.

LEADERSHIP AS SERVICE

Today, as President of Leadership New Mexico, Diego's journey has come full circle. His leadership is defined by a commitment to service, community, and the belief that effective leaders build more than just success—they build trust. "Recognizing that our state's future depends on leaders who are willing to step up, bring people together, and simplify complex issues so we can take meaningful action," he says, is what drives him every day.

He sees leadership not as a spotlight, but as a responsibility to uplift others and create systems that work. "I believe in systems that work, in creating clear paths forward, and in being someone others can count on to get things done."

LEADING WITH CULTURAL ROOTS

Being raised in New Mexico meant growing up in a community where values were lived out in everyday life. These values still guide how Diego leads today. "My cultural identity has taught me the importance of trust and relationships in leadership," he explains. "In our communities, your word matters, and people need to know they can count on you."

This deep-rooted understanding of culture, community, and accountability has also shaped how he views leadership development—especially for Hispanic and underrepresented communities. "Leadership is not about titles; it's about consistently showing up for your community, simplifying challenges so people can take action, and creating clear paths forward for others to follow."



THE MISSION OF LEADERSHIP NEW MEXICO

At Leadership New Mexico, Diego leads with this philosophy front and center. The organization's mission is to *identify, educate, and connect current and emerging leaders across the state to strengthen communities and improve the quality of life for all New Mexicans*. And they are doing just that.



Through a variety of programs, Leadership New Mexico creates inclusive, nonpartisan spaces for leaders from across industries, regions, and backgrounds to grow, collaborate, and lead. “We serve the Hispanic community by ensuring representation and inclusion within our programs, creating opportunities for Hispanic leaders to develop their skills, expand their networks, and take on roles that influence meaningful change in their communities.”

What sets the organization apart is its reach—not only to business leaders and policymakers, but also to those in rural, tribal, and underserved areas. “We’ve simplified access to leadership development for people from all walks of life,” Diego says. “We make sure that our state’s future leaders reflect the people they serve.”

IMPACT IN ACTION

When asked what accomplishment he’s most proud of, Diego doesn’t hesitate: “I am most proud of the relationships we have built across New Mexico that have strengthened communities and developed leaders who are truly making a difference.”

He sees the organization’s alumni stepping into leadership roles—on boards, in government, in business and nonprofit spaces—and knows that Leadership New Mexico has helped equip them with the confidence and tools to lead well. “At the core of this accomplishment is trust. We’ve built a reputation as an organization people can rely on to deliver meaningful leadership experiences that produce consistent, positive outcomes for our state.”



Leadership NM Connect New Mexico 2024 Class



Leadership NM Core Program 2025 Graduates

VISION FOR NEW MEXICO

Diego's vision for New Mexico is clear and compelling: "I hope to see more leaders step forward who are committed to doing things the right way... with integrity, clarity, and a willingness to build trust across differences."

He's especially passionate about seeing more opportunities for young leaders to grow and thrive here—particularly in rural and underserved areas. He envisions a state where leadership is accessible, where collaboration across sectors becomes the norm, and where diverse voices are not only welcomed, but expected at decision-making tables.

ADVICE TO EMERGING HISPANIC LEADERS

To aspiring Hispanic leaders, Diego offers this advice: "Believe that your voice matters and your perspective is needed. Our communities are stronger when Hispanic leaders step forward with confidence, grounded in the values that have shaped who we are: family, hard work, and community connection."

He encourages up-and-coming leaders to seek mentorship, stay humble, ask questions, and never lose sight of the community they serve. "Leadership is a journey," he reminds us. "Keep learning, stay curious, and remember that leading is about lifting others as you move forward."

GROUNDING IN HOME

Outside of work, Diego finds peace and inspiration in the simple joys of New Mexico life—walking in the bosque, hiking its trails, traveling to broaden his perspective, and most importantly, spending time with his son, Cruz, and their rescued pit bull, Luna. “Being with him reminds me why the work we do to build a better future for New Mexico matters,” he shares.

When asked about a meaningful cultural tradition, he reflects on family gatherings around food, faith, and storytelling—especially during the holidays. “These moments ground me in what truly matters,” he says. “They remind me to keep people at the center of decisions and to create space for meaningful connection in every part of life and work.”

Diego currently resides in Bernalillo and remains actively involved in organizations including the New Mexico Amigos, the Hispanic Philanthropic Council, and the Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce—continuing his commitment to strengthening New Mexico’s economic, cultural, and educational fabric.



MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER

Diego Espinoza represents the very essence of what strong, values-driven Hispanic leadership looks like. Through his work at Leadership New Mexico, he is not only building bridges for others—he is shaping a better, more inclusive future for the entire state.

As he puts it: “Ultimately, I believe in the potential of New Mexico, and I am committed to helping it grow into a place where people trust one another, where leadership is accessible, and where we honor our culture while moving forward together.”

The Hispano Philanthropic Society promotes Hispanic leadership in philanthropy through recognition, engagement, and development of Hispanic talent to advance cultural prosperity in our community.

Become a member by contributing to our work today!

