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Thornburg Foundation Celebrates 25 Years of Impact in New Mexico

SANTA FE, N.M. — In the quarter century since its launch, Santa Fe-based Thornburg Foundation has awarded more than 1,700 grants, totaling \$67 million, to New Mexico nonprofits. Those nonprofits have advocated for and helped achieve sweeping policy changes in nearly every arena of New Mexico life, from education to good government, homelessness and housing, water and agricultural systems.

Foundation board members and staff, fellow foundations, and grantees marked the organization's silver anniversary with a luncheon and conversation on Nov. 18 at the Thornburg campus.

"We are so proud of what our grantees have accomplished on behalf of New Mexico, especially in the 11 years since we began targeting our work to drive systems change," said Garrett Thornburg, the foundation's Chairman and Founder. "It's exciting to look forward and imagine what we might achieve together in the next 25 years."

Since 2013, the foundation's leaders updated their traditional grant-making model to a strategic philanthropy approach, using evidence to identify, understand — and allocate funds to solve — some of New Mexico's most pressing problems. Since then, Thornburg's grant giving has helped fuel significant non-partisan wins in New Mexico. Some examples include:

- **Education**

- **Early-Childhood Education:** From 2013 to 2018, Thornburg awarded more than 5 million in grants to New Mexico nonprofits advocating for state support of critical early-childhood programs. Big wins included the creation of the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, the funding of an early-childhood trust fund, and the founding of The Early Childhood Funders Group, a coalition of foundations working together to advocate for comprehensive solutions for New Mexico's youngest residents. These advancements have positioned New Mexico nationally as a model for adoption of early-childhood policy.
- **NM Teacher Residency Program:** After three years of active grantmaking and partnership with state government, the state **Teacher Residency Program** now prepares more than 400 teacher residents, which is 1/3 of all licensed teachers.

- **Regenerative Agriculture:**

- **Conservation Stewardship:** Aided New Mexico in leading the country in enrolled acreage with the **USDA NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program**, with more than 1 million acres enrolled. From 2019 to 2020, acreage went from 233,000 acres to 1,014,000 acres, resulting from the program expanding to include leased federal lands.
- Passage of the bipartisan **Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund** is the first ever dedicated source of recurring funding for conservation in NM and has led to over \$400 million in state appropriations. This funding is creating jobs and building critical infrastructure in local communities, protecting us from natural disasters, safeguarding our water supplies, preserving agricultural heritage, and growing the outdoor-recreation economy.
- **1 in 6 New Mexico producers is trained in regenerative agriculture practices**, over 7,000 technical assistance opportunities have been offered, and at least 11 significant federal and state agricultural reform policies have been passed.
- **Water Policy:**
 - Provided technical and organizational support to the **Governor's Water Policy & Infrastructure Task Force**, a diverse and broadly representative group that produced 17 consensus recommendations for government action to build water resilience. Of these 17 recommendations, 13 have been acted upon by the Legislature and/or the Executive.
- **Good Government:**
 - Supported non-profit efforts to advocate for the creation of New Mexico's **first Independent Ethics Commission**. The NM State Ethics Commission helps advance transparency and accountability in state government.
 - **NM Redistricting Act** was passed, creating an advisory redistricting commission and establishing rigorous criteria for establishing voting boundaries. (passed 2021)
 - Supported our partners' work in advancing **legislative modernization efforts**, such as the addition of new professional legislative staff.
 - **The 2020 Census:** New Mexico is considered one of the most difficult-to-count states in the nation. So between 2018 and 2020, Thornburg helped lead a coalition of foundations in doling out more than \$1.2 million in grants to support an accurate count. Along with state funding, this investment resulted in a 2.8 percent increase in New Mexico's count — and a \$220 million increase in federal funding to the state. A U.S. Census Bureau report deemed New Mexico's overall count the most accurate in the country.
- **Pursuing Federal Funds Pilot:**
 - Partnered with Anchorum Health Foundation and Santa Fe Community Foundation to launch the Pursuing Federal Funds pilot. Together, we made 23 grants totaling \$330,000 and leveraging \$35 million in federal funding for agriculture-, water-, and health-related projects.

“We want to be like dropping a rock into a pond,” said Allan Oliver, Thornburg’s Executive Director. “We want our impact to ripple beyond our fellow foundations, beyond our grantees, beyond the systems they help change, all the way to the people of New Mexico.”

Garrett Thornburg is the Chairman of Santa-Fe based Thornburg Investment Management, a \$46 billion investment management firm that builds wealth for clients worldwide. He created Thornburg Foundation in 1999 and has continued to invest his personal wealth to help grow the organization’s assets to \$180 million, making it one of the largest foundations in New Mexico.

“Garrett builds things to last,” Oliver said. “He encourages us to be courageous and strategic in our work and do all we can to make sure nonprofits have the time, the capacity, the knowledge, and the partnerships to help advocate for good, smart non-partisan policies that benefit all New Mexicans.

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About Thornburg Foundation

Founded in 1999, Thornburg Foundation is a family foundation that works to catalyze high-impact outcomes, using evidence to understand and solve systemic problems, engage stakeholders to drive policy reform, and create meaningful and lasting change. Grant giving is focused on five state-wide policy areas: K-12 Education, Water, Land and Agriculture, Good Governance, and Pursuing Federal Funds. Thornburg also continues to invest in its local community through its homelessness and community-funding portfolios.