

# EAGA Business Builder

eaganm.com

March 30, 2021

## Today's speaker was Rhiannon Samuel—Viante New Mexico



Viante New Mexico is an organization that was formed about 3 years ago by Dale Armstrong (TLC Plumbing) with the vision of making New Mexico a prosperous place to live, work and play. The organization's goal is to make our state a more desirable place by removing it from the wrong end of national lists. Viante (from a Latin word meaning 'a way forward') states that their mission is to collaborate with New Mexicans to craft, and advocate for, common ground solutions that will improve education, reduce crime, and increase economic opportunities in the state. Ms. Samuel is the Executive Director of Viante and she is constantly operating on the front line, attempting to make New Mexico that prosperous place to live, work and play. For Viante to achieve its goals and accomplish its mission, the key would be to get state legislators all working, individually and collectively, toward realizing those same goals. That, however, is a daunting task. Understanding that true change will have to come in small increments, and over time, Viante has chosen to periodically select certain pieces of the improvement puzzle and concentrate on developing, or improving on, those particular aspects. This year's legislative project for Viante was to improve the broadband internet connectivity throughout the state. The internet has developed into an incredible valuable tool (one could argue that it has actually become a mandatory tool) for functioning in the 21st century. But, in order for the internet to be useful at all, it has to be within reach - and at a reasonably sufficient speed. Obviously, the faster the access, the more beneficial the tool. That 'faster access' can come from a variety of sources, collectively called "broadband" internet. Many of our state's residents live in rural areas so they do not have access to facilities that are commonplace in the metropolitan areas. Research indicates that, right now, more than 22% of New Mexicans are not able to live in the technological 21st century because they cannot get access to broadband internet. Without that access, our rural area citizens do not have the same opportunities for education, research, economic development or tele-medicine (incredibly important to communities without regular or reliable hospital facilities) that are available to the city dwellers. Viante's hopes for changes in the internet access arena can be summarized in four bullet-points: 1) Establish a central office for broadband. 2) Find and acquire federal grants that could be used to pay for a portion of the projects costs. 3) Have the state commit to current and long term funding for developing and maintaining the needed access facilities. 4) Coordinate efforts of the state with those of existing providers for a more efficient progress toward the goal. Regarding item #3 on that list: during the last 8 years, New Mexico has allocated about \$300 million dollars to address the issue. Analysis of that spending does not show that any material benefit was achieved. Even if the past funding had been used for maximum benefit, the dollar amount pales in comparison to the \$2 to \$5 billion that projections indicate would be needed for complete success. In Viante's opinion, broadband internet related bills that did pass in this recent session (HB 268 and SB 93 ) are good, and hopefully some positive momentum can be achieved if those pieces of legislation are signed into law. Maybe fill in the areas of the state where there is limited or non-existent broadband, then begin to bolster the existing infrastructure. In addition to Viante's particular project of concentrated efforts (like broadband this time) , the organization also attempts to keep state residents informed about other important aspects of legislative activities. Things like the 'scorecard', which provides details for each legislator's participation in their elected duties (such as: how often they actually voted, or how often they worked with other legislators to accomplish positive results). If you would like to assist Viante in their mission, you can contribute via :<https://viantenm.org/donate/>. Their general website is also provides information regarding their current activities. Thank you to Ms. Samuel for taking the time to provide us with an update the various topics. The above article certainly did not include all of her information, observations and conclusions regarding the general atmosphere at the legislature, the lack of ability for proper public participation, and other aspects of the most recent legislative session. She would be glad to discuss pertinent issues with any interested New Mexico citizen. Her contact information can be found on Viante's website.

- ◆ Answering the apparently still looming question—**YES there is a meeting this coming Tuesday, April 6th.** We will again meet at Rio Bravo Brewing at the usual time of 7:00 am. It will be good to see your smiling faces—after you have been seated and are eating your breakfast, otherwise it will be good to see the cheerful look in your eyes above a correctly positioned mask as you navigate in and out of the facility, or move about on your socially distanced travels through the room in search of entertaining conversation, or another cup of coffee.
- ◆ Upcoming speakers:
 

|     |      |  |
|-----|------|--|
| Apr | 6th  | Tom McMahon—Fenix Inc (Premium Shopping Guide) |
| Apr | 13th | Joe Sierra—Century Bank                        |
| Apr | 20th |  |
| Apr | 27th |  |
| May | 4th  |  |
- ◆ Please check your calendars again and let Marion know if you will be able to speak at one of our upcoming meetings. You are in luck in that we have immediate openings - beginning as soon as April 20th. You don't have to wait any longer before getting your message out to a lot of influential gentlemen.

Contact information for Executive Director: Mario Hernandez

8100 Wyoming Blvd NE; Suite M-4 #35 Albuquerque, NM 87113

Phone: 505-239-0259 email: eagaed@gmail.com