



Custom Training Helps Strengthen Rural Community

UT-Caliber Training Benefits Nonprofits in Rural Southeast New Mexico Town

Nonprofit organizations in Artesia, New Mexico, population 12,000, are learning to better serve their missions through a one-of-a-kind program developed by the PY Foundation and UT's Extended Campus Custom Training (ECCT).

“Do you think UT could help?”

Working closely with Artesia nonprofits, PY Foundation Executive Director Sandra Borges knew that grant dollars and enthusiasm weren't enough to accomplish community goals. “We wanted to give grantees tools and resources to better accomplish their missions and improve sustainability.”

She wondered aloud about collaborating with The University of Texas at Austin during a 2016 visit from UT development officer Amanda Brown Irving. “I thought there must be instructors or professors who could help us with the skills necessary to operate a nonprofit successfully,” Borges said. “Amanda knew exactly what to do. She put me in touch with UT's Extended Campus and we started brainstorming immediately.”

Within a year, trainers rolled into Artesia ready to teach custom programs designed to give nonprofit staffs the skills and knowledge they needed, with no travel costs or inconveniences.

About the PY Foundation

Founded by distinguished UT alumnus **Peyton Yates Jr.** to nurture his hometown and surrounding areas, the private **PY Foundation** invests in education, health services, culture and civic improvement in Artesia, New Mexico.

Challenges

- Artesia, New Mexico, is a rural community with few resources
- Passionate organizers often lacked business skills
- Available capital must be used efficiently

Solutions

- Respected UT trainers come to community regularly
- Practical lessons reinforce most-needed skills
- Community-wide training reaches a variety of groups

Results

- Nonprofit staffs developed confidence and leadership skills
- Networking opportunities nurtured an ecosystem of support
- Fundraising, reporting and community impact improved

Flexible, Practical Training

Training in Artesia is delivered in quarterly sessions, with two topics each, ranging from HR issues, to financing and marketing. No lesson is cookie-cutter or set in stone.

“We’re responsive,” said Melissa Kirk, ECCT senior administrative program coordinator. “During one session we heard that some of the nonprofits were having issues with their boards. Our instructor was able to pivot on the fly and provide practical examples to help them.”

Top-Rated Faculty with Real World Experience

With access to respected UT faculty, ECCT selects trainers who also understand nonprofit needs. For example, Alessandro Gabbi, associate professor of practice in the McCombs School of Business, has been the executive director of an Austin nonprofit for seven years. His course pulled together leadership, strategic planning and other challenges, illustrated by his own experiences.

“They enjoyed and benefited from hearing what I do,” Gabbi said. “Every lesson included a real-world example, a challenge to apply it to their work and time to consult with each other.”

More Effective for Their Missions

Training has paid off across the community including groups that support early childhood education, sober living, a home for single moms and many other dedicated nonprofits. For example, during one session, an executive director learned about capital campaigns and fundraising and left with a plan ready to implement.

Borges is proud of the impact of the program.

“It’s inspiring to see people take this content and run with it to do something really great with what they learn. We love that these classes are inspiring nonprofits to go out and conquer the world.”

Benefits Beyond a Textbook

Outside of the classroom, a backdrop for networking and team building developed organically across a variety of groups. “It was wonderful to see them come together this way,” said Destiny Rojo, PY Foundation program officer. “It was like their own little mentorship program. They would collaborate more. Nobody forced that.”

“It’s a cool ecosystem,” professor Gabbi agreed. “An amazing community where people can lean on each other. I was super impressed. Honestly, I’ve never seen anything like what PY Foundation does in this community.”

Right Courses for Vibrant Future

Nearly six years and dozens of classes later, the ongoing training from UT contributes to a thriving community by helping passionate staffers serve their nonprofits effectively and efficiently.

“We are blessed to have people that truly care about Artesia and that have invested in the community,” Borges said. “We want to make sure that we’re providing a good quality of life. The Chamber of Commerce, the City of Artesia, our nonprofits and corporate partners along with many individuals are working together to make Artesia a better place. UT is part of that picture.”

Nurture your nonprofit’s effectiveness

The Extended Campus Custom Training team’s approach to training begins with listening to you and understanding your needs. Let’s start the conversation today: 512-471-8053 or ecct@austin.utexas.edu.



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