

## **EVFAC/NMFAC 2020 Members and Friends Survey Summary Report**

**July 13, 2020**

The survey was sent to the Center's entire email contact list. Printed copies were sent to members who were on a list for print communications. As of July 13, the Center had received 252 replies online and 2 hard copy responses by mail. No questions were required to be answered, so many have fewer than 254 replies.

Members were generous in writing thoughtful comments and doing justice to them requires a long report. On the final pages there is a summary of some of questions raised by the questions answered.

### **1. What is your interest in Fibers? (check as many as apply)**

Fiber User – 93%  
Fiber Hoarder – 42%  
Fiber Producer – 14%  
Retailer – 9%  
Educator – 20%  
Collector – 15%  
Other – 25%

“Other” responses included people who work at various art organizations and museums; textile gallery owner; folklorist; loom guy; fiber artist [survey creators didn't distinguish levels of “fiber user”]; professional craftsperson; consumer; student; maker; importer; strategist; grant writer; dressmaker; costume designer; student; people aspiring to learn a craft someday; creator of fiber paintings; Many people also amplified on the specific forms of fiber work they do. Weaving was the work most frequently mentioned.

The EVFAC/NMFAC community is very diverse in its relationship to fiber, with many skills and viewpoints represented, but fiber users (whether artists, professionals, hobbyists) are the dominant group by far.

### **2. Are you a current member of NMFAC?**

Yes – 40%  
No – 60%

Of those who chose to share the length of their membership, 32 had been members less than 5 years (10 of these for less than one year); 15 for between 5 and 10 years; and 25 for more than 10 years (several since EVFAC opened). Some of the answers were understandably not precise, so these are approximate totals.

Six people mentioned their membership was intermittent.

Two noteworthy comments were: “until all the unrest, for 20 years” and “...haven't renewed because it was not clear that NMFAC was going to exist.”

### 3. Were you a member of EVFAC or NMFAC in the past, but are not currently a member?

Yes – 35%

No – 61%

In the comments people gave these reasons for not being members:

- classes didn't meet scheduling or availability
- membership fee too high
- distance
- disappointment at offerings
- lack of reply when contact was attempted
- inconvenient hours (no hours Sunday, for example)
- insufficient benefits to justify fee
- serious disagreement with decisions made by Center
- [potential member] too busy
- poor quality of merchandise offered for sale
- poor quality of programs offered
- no point in being a member during COVID-19
- products consigned were not cared for or accounted for correctly

Of these, distance and financial constraints were most often mentioned.

These reasons were mentioned in comments in favor of membership

- ability to be part of retail shows
- classes

Comments related to decisions made in the past few years were particularly long and heartfelt, and included:

- “I did not like the direction EVFAC was going. My sense was that it would come to a crashing halt and it did. I wait and see what the future will bring.”
- “The vibe at the Center has gotten weird in recent years, can't really explain it but it feels a bit sad and desperate.”
- “The mission seemed to change suddenly. Name change... sudden with no membership input. EVFAC was not an ordinary retail business. It served an underserved region of talented members and drew others to it.”
- “...the changes that I saw come down were heartbreaking and made me wonder if there was a place for me anymore.” [this at the end of a longer, detailed comment]

Responses to this question suggest a need to review the membership fee / benefit structure and hours and improve communication with members and the community.

Decisions made in recent years and the way those decisions were made caused serious division, sadness, and concern for the future within the EVFAC/NMFAC community. This is a continuing theme throughout the survey.

#### **4. What fibers interest you most? (check as many as apply)**

Wool – 84%

Cotton – 61%

Llama/Alpaca – 51%

Linen – 47%

Bamboo – 35%

Hemp – 30%

Other – 32% (silk, cashmere, recycled materials, synthetics, rags, non-traditional wefts, angora rabbit, yak, camel, lyocell/Tencel, horsehair, rattan, paper, fabric, mohair, pina, nettle, milk fiber, bison, with silk and various recycled materials the most common replies)

#### **5. If you are a fiber producer (farmer, shepherd, etc), please tell us what you most want from the Center.**

There were 23 replies to this question, 11 of which were variations on n/a or no, leaving only 12 substantive replies (see question 1 – only 14% of respondents are fiber producers). The substantive replies asked for:

- venue for selling
- fiber related workshops
- free speakers Friday nights
- use their fleeces for felting
- ongoing support for fiber producers in the state
- information about what customers want
- community and sharing
- “Have local fibers available for unique fiber artists.”
- design and surface treatment classes
- classes that are less expensive
- supplies for fiber processing
- fibers from animals they do not have

Requests for community, sharing, support for fiber producers, and information about what customers want suggest the Center might consider playing a greater role in connecting local producers with fiber users, perhaps through talks and workshops as well as retail sales and newsletter information.

#### **6. If you are a retailer of fiber or fiber arts, please tell us what you most want from the Center.**

There were 39 replies to this question, 7 of which were variations on n/a or “same”, leaving 32 substantive replies (see question 1 – only 9% of respondents are fiber producers). The substantive replies asked for:

- opportunity to teach
- place to sell work
- opportunity to present fashion shows
- lower consignment rates or wholesale

- information resources (including fiber database, clearinghouse for information, regional calendar of fiber events, resource center)
- supplies (Clasgens yarn, cotton yarns, affordable silk yarn, materials not available elsewhere, donated supplies)
- education (local weaving traditions, color and design, lectures, basketry, felting)
- events
- rental equipment and spaces
- inspiration & community
- marketing mentorship
- improvements to space (“An upscale retail outlet for fine fiber arts”; “A gorgeous, clean professional space to showcase our work.”)
- “... a serious, professional rather than inexpensive hobbyist focus.” [end of a longer comment]
- “A commitment to inclusion and diversity in our leadership.”

Sales opportunities are mentioned most often. Space improvements and fee structures may need attention. Opportunities to consider include acting as a broader information resource and helping to match new sellers with mentors. Broader concerns to consider and address include leadership, diversity, and the focus of the Center.

It is noteworthy that again there is a strong interest in community and information sharing.

## **7. If you are a fiber user, what kind of fiber work do you do?**

Knitting/Crochet – 64%

Weaving – 63%

Sewing/Quilting – 57%

Dyeing – 42%

Embroidery/Needlework – 39%

Spinning – 33%

Felting – 30%

Hooking/Rugmaking – 13 %

Other – 15% (printing on fabric, boro, kantha, slow stitch, invisible mending, loom tweaking, tapestry, cinch making, ikat, bobbin lace, needle lace, machine knitting, Kumihumo, textile painting, surface design, basketry, silk painting, dollmaking, mixed media, costume, colcha, collage, smocking, batik, textile conservation)

The comment “Interested in all of it, but there are only so many hours in the day.” would seem to sum it up.

## **8. If you are a fiber user, where do you prefer your fiber is produced?**

Anywhere – 54%

New Mexico and the Southwest – 30%

North America – 16%

Comments mentioned issues of expense, quality, fair trade, ethical production, and cruelty-free treatment of animals as primary concerns. Some respondents like to purchase local products when they travel. Hand production and small-mill production matter to some respondents.

Those who prefer to use local fibers were not in the majority of respondents, but were heavily represented in comments, and some had a great deal to say. One wrote about the history of fiber production in New Mexico, and problems maintaining mills, recommending a renewed relationship with the Mora Spinning Mill and commenting “The production of local/regional fibers is sustainable only if there are markets; I try to help with that on a very small scale.” It appears fair to say that while use of local fiber is not important to many respondents, those who do care about this issue care greatly.

One significant comment on this question addresses diversity rather than local/non-local: “Who are you catering to as consumers? Does the Santa Fe NMFAC cater to wealthier consumers who are demographically white? If you want to gain more sales and customers will you cater more to Indigenous fiber artist who can sale as 100% Native made fiber Arts per NM law?”

## **9. What is your age?**

Under 20 – 0%

20 to 39 – 5%

40 to 59 – 16%

Over 60 – 77%

Prefer not to say – 2%

## **10. Are you interested in taking any classes or workshops at the Center?**

Yes – 74%

No – 24%

(yes, that doesn't equal 100%; there were a number of people who did not reply)

### **Duration/Timing Preferences:**

- once a week/weekend for several weeks (12 times)
- 1-3 day (8 times)
- 1-2 day (3 times)
- weekly classes
- 1 day (12 times)
- 3 day (14 times)
- 3 to 7 days
- multi-day / consecutive day (4 times)
- 3 to 5 days
- half-day to 3 day
- multiple weekends
- morning or afternoon length / half-day / few hours (4 times)
- lectures/talks/demos (20 times)
- "short courses" in basic techniques such as crochet and knitting - “So, in the case of crochet, an hour would teach a class participant how to make a chain of single stitches. The next class could

cover, say, the idea of double stitches and how to count a chain to achieve an even result. The third class could cover half stitches and treble stitches. The fourth class could introduce how to use these stitches to make things, such as how to make a table mat or clothing accessory with filet crochet squares on a chain, and a design using empty, half filled, and filled squares. Such a short course could be offered at minimal cost, say \$5 or less per participant for the hour, especially if the teacher were willing to donate the hour's class time and the materials were furnished from the Center's donation box.”

- virtual (4 times)
- daytime (11 times)
- evening (7 times)
- morning (4 times)
- afternoon
- weekend (11 times)
- weekday (2 times)
- Monday or Tuesday
- after school for students

Topic Preferences: (counts for general topics don't include counts for specific topics listed below them)

- weaving (22 times)
- tapestry weaving (6 times)
- advanced tapestry (2 times)
- beginner weaving (4 times)
- Navajo weaving (4 times)
- intermediate level Navajo weaving
- Rio Grande / Chimayo weaving (4 times)
- rug weaving (3 times)
- rigid heddle or small loom weaving (3 times)
- inkle / band weaving (2 times)
- off-loom /free form weaving (2 times)
- card weaving
- TDF floor looms
- three-dimensional weaving
- warping a loom
- finishing techniques for weavers - borders, tassels, braids, etc.
- low tech weaving (techniques one can do outdoors and are portable)
- how to create a weaving pattern for 2 or 4 harness loom
- New Mexico landscape tapestry
- weaving with fine threads
- 4 or 8 harness weaving
- 4 harness weaving
- 8 and 16 harness weaving
- Bedouin Weaving
- Robyn Spady
- Janet Dawson
- Melissa Weaver Dunning

- Olds College Master Weaver, Levels 1-5
  - texture in weaving
  - tapestry design
  - complex weaving
  - weaving inspiration
  - weaving refreshers
  - rag techniques
- 
- spinning (16 times)
  - spinning with Rio Grande wheel (2 times)
  - working with what you've spun
- 
- dyeing (10 times)
  - natural dyeing (8 times)
  - shibori (6 times)
  - fabric dyeing (2 times)
  - space-dyeing
  - Japanese dyeing
  - dyeing with fiber reactive dyes on different materials
  - dyeing wool
  - dyeing silks
- 
- knitting (7 times)
  - intermediate knitting
  - advanced knitting
  - knitting items to be felted
- 
- felting (6 times)
  - needle felting (3 times)
  - wet felting
- 
- Colcha (4 times)
  - embroidery (3 times)
- 
- traditional New Mexico/ Southwest fiber use (3 times)
  - historical textile education (2 times)
- 
- design (2 times)
  - quilting (4 times)
  - crazy quilts
  - rug hooking (2 times)
  - fabric printing (2 times)
  - fiber processing / fiber prep (2 times)
  - using a drum carder
  - different types of fiber
  - fiber care and storing

- patterning for sewing / clothing construction (2 times)
- mending
- hand sewing
- basketry (2 times)
- basketry using local fibers from the wild
- using recycled materials
- techniques from around the world
- marketing
- how best to photograph textiles (another included this in marketing, above)
- mixed media
- batik
- sprang
- surface design and creation
- surface embellishment
- silk painting
- silk marbling
- wool applique
- crochet
- bobbin lace
- tatting
- beadweaving
- ristra making
- paper making
- silk screening
- macrame
- fiber art workshops by high-level fiber artists
- “I would like to see a diverse mix of contemporary and traditional art. Beautiful things happen when we engage traditional forms with contemporary movements... and beautiful things happen when we have elders, young makers, and school children, all sharing space.”
- groups to work on projects together
- fieldtrips to a specific place - let's see more of what's happening in New Mexico
- “busting fear”

Cost is a concern. One respondent suggests scholarships be available. Parking and lodging are mentioned as concerns. Other locations, such as Albuquerque and Las Cruces, are of interest to a few.

Time and duration preferences are closely tied to location and work life, with those far from the Center preferring multi-day classes or workshops (e.g. 1 to 3 days in a row), and people in traditional jobs wishing for weekend or evening events. One comment recommended offering the same class at different times or on different days if possible. Given the variety of preferences, that seems a wise suggestion.

It is worth noting most responses do not address youth education efforts. Three did. Since youth who participated in Center activities were not surveyed, other sources for that information will be needed.

One comment addressed the need for the Center to be sure there is proper preparation for classes, such as having the looms ready for weaving. “However, speaking to the issues with chaotic/absent



leadership, the center did not have the basics in place when the class started. Many of the class looms were not prepared in advance; for a 3-day tapestry class, only two were spent weaving for many of us.”

This question yielded an extraordinarily complex set of answers. When an education leader is in place at the Center, that person should review the intricate ways these answers intersect. It is impossible to do it justice in a short summary. The diversity of answers, including many very specific subject requests suggest there may be opportunities to match individual teachers and students, offering the Center and equipment as teaching space, rather than trying to fill classes or workshops on all topics. Maintaining an online listing of member-teachers might also be a service.

### **11. Are you interested in teaching any classes or workshops at the Center?**

Yes – 18%

No – 80%

(yes, that doesn't equal 100%; there were a number of people who did not reply)

People are interested in teaching and/or providing demos of rug hooking, punch needle rug hooking, miniature punch needle, felting (including needle felting, needle felt sculpture), colcha, children's sewing, children's printing, dyeing (including shibori, procion dyes), weaving (computer designed and controlled weaving, pattern drafting, weave structure, tapestry, Chimayo weaving, rigid heddle, weave structures), knitting (beginner, advanced, children's, many specific techniques), spinning (including art yarns), quilting, crochet, basketry, fiber prep, carding (hand and drum), sheep to shawl, sweater upcycling, intersection of fiber and digital, basketry, color, fashion, naalbinding, pattern drafting, business for artisans , marketing, production ethic, care of historic textiles and textile art, papermaking, journal making , collage , encaustic on paper.

Again, a variety of time spans are suggested. Some teachers will teach in-person only, while some are open to Zoom or other online options.

One respondent comments (in part): “I would like to see more producer support, better communication with teachers, and a commitment to promoting the cultural fiber heritage of our region first.”

The Center is extremely fortunate to have so many skilled teachers in the community.

### **12. How often would you go to the Center in Española before the COVID-19 shutdown?**

More than once a month – 6%

Once a month – 7%

A few times a year – 40%

Once a year – 9%

Less than once a year – 12%

Never been there – 12%

Other – 14%

Some respondents say their visits vary with time of year, projects they are interested in, etc. Many respondents do not live in the area, and explain that is the reason they seldom visit. Others cite inconvenient hours that conflict with work schedules. Another misses having a work table with seating and good lighting in the front area.

**13. How often did you go to the Santa Fe location before the COVID-19 shutdown? (it was only a few months from opening to shutdown)**

More than once a month – 4%  
Once a month – 2%  
A few times – 16%  
Once – 19%  
Never been there – 49%  
Other – 8%

Numerous respondents had visited or hoped to visit. Some had or hoped to have work shown there.

There were some strong responses from those opposed to the store and from those concerned that it was unsustainable. One respondent reported visiting and being disappointed.

**14. What would you like to see MORE of when you shop at the Center? (check as many as apply)**

Small tools and supplies for fiber arts - 58%  
Locally produced yarns – 50%  
Yarns for weaving – 41%  
More gently used items – 40%  
Yarns for knitting/crochet – 37%  
Finished hand made goods and art - 33%  
Large tools such as wheels and looms – 28%  
Unspun fibers – 27%  
Finished fabrics – 22%  
More new items – 14%  
Yarn for other uses – 10%  
Other – 30%

Other items of interest include sewing notions, novelty yarns, partial skeins (leftovers), bulky and rug yarns, fabrics used for rug weaving (colors, plaids, dyeables), sheepskins, more looms, a bigger choice of yarns for knitting (lace, fingering), high quality wool mix yarns, cotton mix yarns, undyed yarns, fine yarns, affordable yarns on large cones, project kits (might go with online classes), books and magazines, videos, silk, specialty items (specialty embroidery threads, tools, fabrics, etc.), postcards, colcha supplies, scrap bags, dyes (including natural dyes), basketry supplies, clothing in natural fibers, local yarns, handmade buttons, patterns, and felted fabric for surface embellishment.

One respondent had a comment specific to the Santa Fe location: “I believe that shop is perfectly situated to market high-quality NM-made fibers, fiber art and wearables to locals and to visitors. It is great visibility for the Center.”

One wrote they wanted “A shop with excellent professional craftsmanship and color that has to do with the times we live in. Also recycled concepts.” There was another complaint about the quality of work for sale. Several wrote to support continued or expanded acceptance of donated items that could be sold, recycled, or upcycled. There was also a complaint about staff being unhelpful.

One respondent noted they buy all their yarn wholesale.

On the positive side, there were many respondents who liked the mix of items for sale, and one who felt the price of her spinning wheel was “insanely reasonable.”

**15. Is there anything you would like to see LESS of when you shop at the Center? (check as many as apply) [note: most people skipped this question; only 73 answered]**

Finished fabrics – 21%  
More gently used items – 12%  
Finished hand made goods and art - 12%  
Unspun fibers – 8%  
Yarn for other uses – 7%  
Yarns for knitting/crochet – 6%  
Large tools such as wheels and looms – 4%  
More new items – 4%  
Small tools and supplies for fiber arts - 3%  
Yarns for weaving – 3%  
Locally produced yarns – 0%  
Other – 60%

Comments include complaints about the look of the Center, the space taken by donated large equipment, grumpy staff, things that look old and unclean, polyester and plastic, and clutter. The subject of general cleanup appears under many question headings.

Suggestions include more frequent purges of unsold donated items, worrying more about inclusivity and bringing fewer wealthy people into fiber arts and worrying less about the elite, bringing in changing shows, and collaborating with the high school.

Some love the store and find it wonderful. One says, “The center should be a jewel of all kind of supplies, and not focus on one category,” and other comments echo this.

**16. Would you use an online store and have items shipped to you?**

Yes – 62%  
No – 10%  
Maybe – 28%

Some need to see and feel their fiber products; some prefer to but would welcome an online store because of distance issues or the pandemic.

Respondents point to the need for a good website, some way to assess quality of merchandise, prompt shipping, quick communication, competitive prices, and helpful staff. Sample cards would be helpful.

Tierra Wools and Weaving in Beauty are cited as good examples. Also recommended were some large retailers such as The Woolery, Halcyon, and Yarn Barn of Kansas – though other comments point out that the Center would be competing with these larger retailers. Some feel this is too labor intensive and would not be feasible. One person suggests it might work for finished pieces.

There seems to be good support for an online store if it is set up correctly.

### **17. Would you consider taking an online class from the Center?**

Yes – 44%

No – 22%

Maybe – 34%

Many prefer in-person classes but see a place for online classes as well. Some are enthusiastic about online classes. Some do not have adequate Internet access. Concerns include availability of supplies and equipment, format of and platform for classes, and appropriate content.

Classes by Rebecca Mezoff, Weaving in Beauty, and [www.textile.org](http://www.textile.org) are recommended as good examples. On the other hand, respondents point out that a great deal of information is already available online for free via YouTube and similar outlets.

One respondent recommends looking into offering one-on-one help online.

There is support for online classes but finding the correct niche will be important.

### **18. If we implement COVID-19 safety measures and clearly post information about them in advance, would you be comfortable coming to the Center to (check as many as apply):**

Shop – 85%

Attend an outdoor event – 59%

Take a class – 47%

Use equipment – 30%

Attend an indoor event – 28%

Volunteer – 16%

Teach at the center – 13%

Comments reflect the concerns and choices of individual respondents, who set different limits on what they will and will not do during the pandemic. Most express concern about COVID-19, though a couple state they are not worried at all. There is some concern about non-compliance.

It will be necessary to see how people respond to the procedures when they are in place, but there is clear support for trying limited, safe re-opening.

## **19. How important are events such as the Fiber Crawl, Churro Week, Fall Fiber Fiesta?**

Very important – 42%

Important – 23%

Somewhat important – 18%

Not important – 8%

Some are more important than others – 5%

Respondents say retail opportunities are important for them. Fall Fiber Fiesta is noted as an especially important economic driver. One person commented “I love the idea of these events but have been waiting since forever for them to be coherently executed in a way that they benefit the members, not just the organization!” Events are also noted as important for outreach and exposure. Fall Fiber Fiesta and Fiber Crawl are mentioned in many comments, but there is also support for Churro Week.

There is concern about events during the pandemic. There is concern that the number of events overtaxes the organization, and one person suggests the events need to be more volunteer- and Board-driven. One respondent said it was not pleasant to work with EVFAC on an event. Another expressed concern about timely payment to artists after events.

Several respondents offered very detailed answers that should be reviewed by anyone planning upcoming events.

## **20. How important is supporting the local fibershed and local fiber production?**

Very important – 63%

Important – 31%

Somewhat important – 6%

Not important – less than 1%

Almost all respondents find this important, a level of agreement highly unusual throughout the survey. Two people skipped this question; two chose “not important.”

While some who commented do not use local fiber in their own work, they still encourage support of local fiber production. Heritage, tradition, the specialness of New Mexico are factors named as important.

There are many thoughtful comments such as

- “I thought this was part of the purpose of EVFAC.”
- “We have always had such potential to create a fiber shed in New Mexico. There is an opportunity to focus on good[s] for the home would set us apart from the current focus on clothing as cotton, hemp, and linen that are appropriate for wearables in our climate are not sustainably cultivated in our area or at least that I’m aware of. There could be a New Mexico line of some sort if those materials were available.”

- “EVFAC SHOULD DYE LOCAL YARNS AND SELL LOCAL PRODUCT AND EMPLOY LOCAL PEOPLE”
- “NM Fiber Shed and the Oveja Project is an important issue, and EVFAC should be sitting at the table of both. The fiber value chain is very disrupted, and it has been challenging for EVFAC to take it on. EVFAC has to determine what its role in the Fiber Chain, and possibly the only ones that it can handle are: Become an education center for all the initiatives. Purchase a small quantity of wool and make it into products that sell quickly. Develop a professional membership and work these individuals (somewhat like a fiber cooperative) in purchasing larger quantity of wool, and processing it into products they need.”
- “Let's just say I think it needs to be the defining characteristic of EVFAC.”
- “If we don't focus on it, who will?”

Some respondents are not familiar with the term “fibershed.”

One respondent cautions that it is necessary to broaden views beyond the local. Another advises “if local fiber brings larger share of revenue over other product, use it--if not drop it. NMFAC is a business, nonprofit, but still a business--not a charity.”

Near-unanimity makes this a clear area for future focus.

## **21. How important is supporting traditional fiber arts?**

Very important – 73%

Important – 24%

Somewhat important – 4%

Not important – less than 1/2%

Again, there is an unusually high level of agreement on this issue, even higher than support for local fiber production. Two people skipped this question; one chose “not important.” Respondents see this as part of the Center's mission. Again, culture and tradition are cited as important.

Comments include:

- “Creating a way for the traditional arts to be economically viable is a critical cultural support.”
- “It's the entire reason EVFAC is where and what it is.” [this is only the beginning of a very long and thoughtful comment on history and culture]
- “Traditional fiber arts are important to maintain culture. Expanding the number of people who understand, appreciate and practice traditional fiber arts is critical to maintaining cultural diversity and who we are as people.”
- “I've devoted my life to keeping these traditions alive. And they are why the Center is so special. This place's fiber traditions connect us to a bigger world of fiber and fiber artists. That connection is a thing of beauty and strength.”
- “This to me is the main purpose of EVFAC”

Questions are raised as to whether “traditional” means New Mexico traditions only.

There is support for contemporary fiber arts as well. One person commented “But let that not be the ONLY viable fiber art form for NM. Nothing grows from being stagnant.” Another wrote “It's extremely important. But if it's to the exclusion of all else, it's counterproductive.”

Near-unanimity makes this a clear area for future focus.

## **22. What have we done well in the past?**

Respondents appreciated classes, events (especially Fall Fiber Fiesta), social gatherings, outreach, “getting the word out,” fundraising efforts, focus on education and preservation, friendliness, equipment rental, and items for sale (new and donated items). One respondent summed things up, saying the Center had “Built and strengthened a creative and diverse community where all people are welcomed and valued.” Other comments also emphasized community, such as “Sense of community and opportunity. The first time I walked in to EVFAC, I felt that I was home. Whenever I volunteered working retail, I would repeatedly hear people who had never been in before raving and gushing about how wonderful the place was.”

Several respondents offered mixed responses, though, such as “Pretty much everything except Board transparency, Strategic Planning, and financial management,” and “it has been very uneven with constant turn over so I'm not sure what specifics worked well--at times things seemed fine, at others? No idea what was going on.” Responses like these show deep concern for the organization, confusion over its direction, and a touch of sadness rather than anger. For example, “EVFAC was moving to be a broader and more prominent organization in the state...This was an exciting prospect because New Mexico needed something like that. That was when we joined EVFAC. Personnel at the center were talented, professional, progressive, and ambitious to expand. ... We were hopeful. It seemed to come to halt and personnel changed or disappeared. When EVFAC lost that momentum, we didn't renew membership.”

## **23. What do we need to work on going forward?**

Respondents are looking for:

- inclusivity
- diversity
- accessibility
- upscale focus
- “explicit recognition of the difference between people who enjoy fiber as amateurs and those who are truly fiber artists”
- room for non-artist craftspeople
- culture of mutual respect and civility
- removal of offensive language from online curriculum materials
- community involvement
- outreach
- “a website that features the work and studios of fiber artists in the area”
- educational opportunities
- collaboration with schools

- attracting the younger generation
- expansion
- “keep it simple” (focus on a few things and do them well)
- improvements to the building, especially the heating system
- online store
- COVID-safe practices
- transparency
- financial planning
- sustainability and stability.
- research and planning
- stable staffing
- staff who are knowledgeable, friendly, and “tuned into the local cultures and community”
- communication

Many responses touched on the need to rebuild trust. Many responses focus on organizational issues and the need to build a sustainable, financially viable, stable organization.

Some responses are clearly in conflict. There are multiple responses in favor of expansion, and also multiple responses asking that things be more focused and narrowed down, for example.

One commenter said the Center needs to work on “Proving that wonderful family will be or is already back after taking a little break.” This gives hope there is enough good will in the community to make it possible to work through the conflicting interests and find creative solutions. There is some anger, though: “MAKE A PROFIT AND SERVE THE COMMUNITY REMEMBER THE REASON EVFAC WAS FORMED IN THE FIRST PLACE THE COMMUNITY DOES NOT LIKE YOU. EVFAC MUST HONOR THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE TRADITIONAL SKILLS AND ASK THEIR ADVICE ON HOW TO DO THINGS.” also, “Go back to your roots. Don't try to be something you are not. Don't waste money and time on outside business consultant that tell you to expand by losing your identity.”

#### **24. What would you like NMFAC to focus on during the next 3 years?**

Again, very many responses focus on building a financially secure, stable organization. Others are directed to specific programs. Support of local artists, fibershed, and community are also mentioned repeatedly.

Again, some replies focus on questions related to mission or identity, for example:

- “Come back to the original focus of EVFAC. Why did the center open in the first place? Was it to have a gallery or was it to uphold traditions and support the local fibershed? Why/how was it successful in the first place? Focus on what succeeded before and try to grow off of that.”
- “Seems to me that NMFAC needs to spend some time looking inward, figuring out its mission, getting on the same page, and having a plan for moving forward. Having a presence in Santa Fe ... is that bringing in money, or costing NMFAC? Is it creating a market or just an emphasis on high-end goods and leaving cottage industry for the people who yearn to create but don't have the time, materials, or whatever to be "artists" out? I think NMFAC should not forget the latter and focus on programs that support cottage industry and independence in this way.”



One respondent is succinct: “Pick something.”

## **25. Are there any organizations that you would like us to start working with?**

Suggestions include area educational institutions and galleries with similar interests, the Oveja Project, other fiber organizations and guilds, local galleries, schools, museums, Taos Pueblo, Ooo-oooh-nah art center, indigenous after school learning programs of 8 Northern Pueblos, International Folk Art Market, Meow Wolf, Mora Valley Spinning Mill, MAVWA, Moving Arts, IAIA, Bond House/ Mision y Convento, Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Lowriders, Santa Fe Opera, state film board, Weaving in Beauty, Living Felt, Ghost Ranch, Northern Youth Project, 4H, local decorators, home furnishing shops, Textile Society of America, colleges and universities, Heart of New Mexico Fiber Festival, Albuquerque Fiber Arts Council, New Mexico true, state tourism office, Santa Fe Extension Homemakers, regional community foundations, Mountain and Plains Fibershed, SAQA-NM, wholesalers of fiber products, state outdoor council, Livestock Conservancy, American Tapestry Alliance, New Mexico Women in the Arts.

One respondent points out there have been many collaborations, but people don't know about them.

Some advice caution: “I think you should get your feet under you before bringing others into the fold.”

People have served up a wonderful list of potential partners, and selection of the right partners will depend on future projects and programs.

## **26. Have you done volunteer work with the center in the past?**

Yes – 16%

No – 84%

Volunteers helped in a very wide variety of areas: in organizational roles, as teachers, in retail, at many events, and more.

## **27. Would you like to volunteer in the future?**

Yes – 29%

No – 59%

(many did not answer)

Many cannot volunteer because of time constraints or distance from the Center. The pandemic is also a concern. Some are waiting to see how things go at the Center. Some would like to know what is needed. Many offer help in specific areas. When the Center is ready to reopen to volunteers, the offers of help in this section should be reviewed.

## **28. Do you have any comments on the recent name change?**

Fewer than half of respondents answered. Comments are divided, with no consensus. Some say they are confused. A few don't care, but most who commented have strong opinions.

Those who like NMFAC point to inclusivity (including the whole state), ambition, the fact the name is easier, possibility of more access to fundraising opportunities, broader audience, and expanding focus. In favor of EVFAC, respondents point to inclusivity for people of color, tradition, history, importance of place, uniqueness, and connection. Some feel insulted or abandoned by the change, and some feel it tends toward bigotry.

To some the more important issue was the way the change was handled, which they criticize as divisive or unfair. Also, lack of effective communication about the reasons for the change has left some people guessing at reasons, and this easily leads to misunderstandings.

There is a great deal of healing needed around this issue.

### **29. Do you have any comments on the Santa Fe location?**

Slightly more than half respondents answered. The question is now largely moot, as the location is being closed due to the pandemic. As with the question on the name change, opinions are strongly divided, and the way the decision was made and communicated is criticized.

### **30. What else would you like us to know?**

Many thanks to community members who responded to this question with ideas for future programs, constructive criticism, enthusiasm, love for the Center, and kind words of encouragement for everyone who is working to make things better. We hear that there are problems, that there is a need to define focus, and that "I have no clue what you are/want to be." We also hear how committed you are to the Center, and that gives great hope for the future.

There were a few specific issues we'd like to address:

- to the person who advised the Center become a 501(c)3 to get grant funding, the Center is a registered non-profit, and has been very successful in applying for grants (but maybe should communicate about this more)
- to the person who asks, quite reasonably, for an explanation of why the last Board resigned, we cannot answer as no reason was given or recorded at the Center
- to the person concerned about the Taos Wool Festival, that is not an NMFAC/EVFAC program, and the terrific people at MAVWA who do run it every year have announced a virtual festival for 2020.

Thank you all for not giving up (and for reading this much detail).

## **SUMMARY:**

The EVFAC/NMFAC community includes a diverse group of fiber producers, users, and retailers, with a wide variety of opinions. The community includes committed long-term members, newcomers, unhappy former members who still hope for a better future, occasional visitors – a wide range of people who have been very generous in writing thoughtful replies to survey questions.

Community, in many variations, formed the theme of many responses. Many answers also reflected deep affection, even love, for the Center and what it does. Despite the problems outlined, this gives real hope for a bright future.

Responses offer both practical and “big-picture” philosophical issues for leadership of the Center to consider. These are listed below, in the order in which they arose from survey questions.

Respondents raised important problems and gave many excellent ideas; now it is necessary to see what can actually be done under current conditions. The Center must contend with serious financial and staffing issues in addition to the global pandemic crisis.

### Practical Issues to Consider:

- Does the membership fee / benefits scheme need adjustment?
- Does the Center need different hours of operation, or different options for class times?
- Are procedure changes needed to improve handling of consigned items and communication with consignors?
- Do survey answers suggest changes to retail inventory the Center should stock?
- What are the best practices for improving communications with members? (The Board has already acted to place minutes online promptly after they are approved and has implemented a board email address. Is there more to do?)
- In what ways might it be possible to make better connections between local fiber producers and users (workshops, speaker series, newsletter articles, information clearinghouse/fiber producer directory...)?
- Are consignment fee structures correct? Should wholesale sales opportunities be considered?
- How can the Center’s space and cleanliness be improved?
- Does strong interest in locally produced fiber suggest any changes in what the Center should offer for sale, or what relationships it should build?
- Offering education/classes/workshops is very complex. How will this be handled? What is the impact of the pandemic on this?
- Can there be scholarships for classes?
- What can be done to provide better support for teachers (online listing of member-teachers? promoting referral of individual students to member-teachers?)
- There is support for an online store. Can it be implemented, and what should it offer?
- In the area of online classes, what are the right format and content to offer to ensure the classes are helpful? Is one-on-one online help an option?
- What is a reasonable role for EVFAC during the pandemic? What can be offered and how safe can the Center be made?
- What kinds of events (including sales opportunities) are possible during the pandemic?
- There is a high level of agreement that it is important to support the local fibershed and local fiber production. How should this be accomplished?

- There is a high level of agreement that it is important to support traditional fiber arts. How should this be accomplished?
- How does the Center restore trust where it has been lost?
- What organizational capacities need work (financial planning, communications, staffing, etc)?
- When will it be safe for volunteers to return, and what volunteer opportunities will be available?

#### Big-Picture Issues to Consider:

- Some decisions made in recent years, and the ways those decisions were made, caused serious hurt and division. How will this be addressed? What safeguards might be put in place to prevent this in future?
- How can the atmosphere at the Center return to one of creative, friendly community?
- How will the Center seek to improve diversity, especially in leadership?
- How does the Center balance the needs of professionals and hobbyists?
- How does the Center fit into the local fiber environment?
- Is there concern over the small percentage of respondents under 60 years of age?
- Is there a need to address issues related to inclusivity, diversity, or elitism?
- How does the Center relate to the local community?
- Respondents listed many things they'd like the Center to work on. How will these be prioritized?
- Respondents asked questions related to identity. How will these be addressed?

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