

# MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

## Understanding Community Needs in Montana



MSU Extension's mission is to improve the lives of Montana citizens by providing unbiased, research-based education and information that integrates learning, discovery and engagement to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Montana State University Extension Agents conducted listening sessions and key informant interviews in counties and on reservations across the state to identify and prioritize the most pressing needs in their communities.

# 823

participants provided feedback through

**47** listening sessions and **231** key informant interviews

A summary of the identified needs follows.

# Across Montana, the following themes emerged as being important needs...

## Community Resources & the Built Environment

- **Community Services** - Medical and emergency services, community centers, childcare options, retail and professional services, and other local resources
- **Housing** - Affordable, available, and workforce housing
- **Infrastructure** - Adequate physical infrastructure or improvements in water and wastewater systems, roads, and internet availability



## People & Community Capacity

- **People** - Opportunities for youth, families, and seniors to grow, learn, engage, and interact
- **Leadership** - Collaboration among community groups or partners and building human and social capital
- **Education** - Growth and improvement in formal and non-formal education
- **Activities** - Activity options including community events, recreational opportunities, and additional options for youth and families

## Food Systems & the Environment

- **Agriculture** - Long term farm and ranch management, production costs and profitability, agricultural land preservation, and the impacts of pests, weeds, drought, and other natural disasters
- **Food** - Food that meets individual needs, including food that is accessible, affordable, culturally relevant, locally grown, or preserved or prepared at home
- **Natural Resources** - Natural resource management, use, and protection; natural disaster preparedness and mitigation; and energy use
- **Horticulture** - Home and community gardens and horticulture resources and training



## Health & Well-being

- **Financial** - Adequate financial resources and education to address cost-of-living, estate planning, budgeting, and financial planning
- **Mental** - Mental health, stress relief, suicide prevention, and substance misuse resources and services
- **Physical** - Opportunities for healthy living through recreational pursuits and use of facilities and community resources

## Economic Prosperity

- **Local Businesses** - Training, education, and financial resources to support business profitability across industries
- **Economic Development** - Job creation, wage growth, and community beautification
- **Workforce** - Adequate workforce and the ability to attract, train, and provide livable wages



*"This needs assessment allowed me to see and understand the needs of the community better and... how to address and develop future programming, whether it be facilitating community groups or developing Extension-led teaching programs."*

Thank you to the Montanans who supported this important process and to the MSU Extension Agents who coordinated the local needs assessment process. This report summarizes needs shared across the state, please contact your local office for information specific to your county or reservation: <https://apps.msuextension.org/directory/>  
Data was collected between February 16 and May 31, 2022. This data will inform MSU Extension programming in upcoming years.

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