

STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

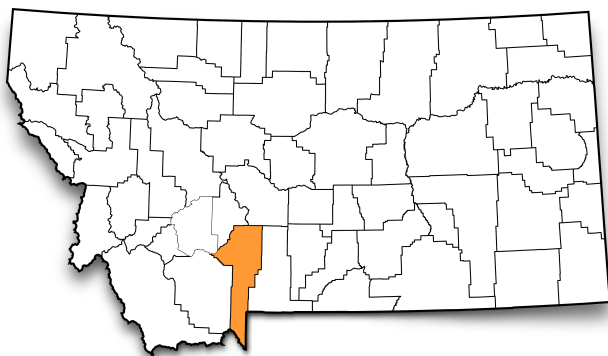
The Role of Counties in Economic Development



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GALLATIN COUNTY, MONTANA

Strategies to Retain a Young Skilled Workforce



The northern gateway to Yellowstone Park Gallatin County is a medium-sized county with nine cities and the largest and fastest growing population in southwest Montana. Bozeman, the largest city in the county, has a population of approximately 40,000 residents. The county's high growth in tourism throughout the 1990s and early 2000s led to increased demand for infrastructure and commercial and residential units, which boosted the building and construction industries. One of Gallatin's principal challenges is retaining its highly educated population. With Montana State University (MSU) located in the county, 45.4 percent of county residents over 25 have attained a college degree. Annually, the large

research university brings over 14,000 students. However, lack of career opportunities within the county do not retain the MSU graduates to work in the county.

Gallatin County represents an economic hub for the southwestern Montana region. For years prior to the recession, rapid organic economic growth kept economic development from being a priority for county officials. The economic recession, however, raised Bozeman officials' concern over the state of its economy and strategic future planning. Bozeman adopted an economic gardening approach to economic development, an individualized strategy targeting existing industries. It calls for providing businesses already invested in the area with tools and information to support and promote their growth. As a tourist destination, the city of Bozeman has focused on leisure and hospitality traditionally, but recently expanded to larger local industries with high growth potential, which generally pay mid to high wages. These sectors include high tech, photonics, bioscience and pharmaceuticals, the outdoor industry, manufacturing and the social services sector. Fueled by a high quality of life and community amenities, the technology and manufacturing industries have seen rapid job growth in the county, especially within the city of Bozeman.

- Population, 2013: 94,720
- County Board size: 3
- County Administrator

Gallatin College

Gallatin County and the city of Bozeman recognized the need to cultivate an educated workforce and balance the need for expanding job training with job creation. The presence of the University and the resulting concentration of research and technology activities, provides an established resource and opportunities for economic growth. In

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2009, the city of Bozeman, created an economic development plan that targeted mid to high paying job generation and diversification of the economy. As part of the plan, Bozeman city officials facilitated collaboration between the University and prominent private sector industry leaders to identify skills in high-demand and create a solution to meet those needs.

Gallatin County, Mont. and the City of Bozeman collaborated on organizing funding for workforce training in the county. At the initiative of the Gallatin County and the City of Bozeman, county residents passed a mill levy in November 2013 — with projected revenue of nearly \$370,000 per year — to support Gallatin College. The Montana State University (MSU) Board of Regents created the college in 2010, collaborating with the City of Bozeman, local and state legislators, the commissioner of Higher Education and the president of MSU. Gallatin College, as a two-year alternative to MSU Certificate, was planned to offer Associate Degrees, as well as other two-year education services. The city of Bozeman invested approximately \$125,000 of city taxpayer dollars for three years to support the school. Gallatin College followed with a workforce needs assessment to further develop an understanding of business requests, and create and expand effective workforce programs. The needs assessment revealed demand for a program in industrial sewing. In the past, businesses specializing in producing fishing products, backpacks and canvas hunting tents conducted industrial sewing training internally, which was expensive and time-consuming. To fill the gap with a more flexible and affordable option, the University established an industrial sewing program.

Gallatin College offers workforce training certificates and associate degrees in areas related to the five fastest growing sectors in the county: technology, outdoor industry, bioscience, manufacturing and photonics. Revenues from the mill levy allow for the creation of new programs in small business management, advanced manufacturing

and machining, IT support technician, culinary arts and more than 20 other programs in healthcare, business, hospitality, technology and manufacturing industries. Gallatin College enrollment increased from 723 students in 2010 to nearly 1,000 students in 2013.

The collaboration between the Gallatin County, City of Bozeman, private sector, the University and other stakeholders led to a targeted solution to train and retain educated residents within the communities. The establishment of Gallatin College helps educate the workforce in the county, diversify its economy and expand into industries that support job growth and economic diversity in the community.



Welding Technology Program, one of the workforce programs offered by Gallatin College and Montana State University.