



The Montana Bear Program is a partnership with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Department of Labor, ExecutivePulse and Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA).

WHY BEAR?: It is an essential piece to successful economic development.

The Montana BEAR Program is all about outreach, building relationships and providing resources to strengthen Montana businesses. Research shows that the most growth, wealth creation and expansion capabilities exist within our homegrown businesses that were conceived, incubated and grown in Montana. These are the businesses Montana BEAR Teams target.

BEAR is not designed to be an "either BEAR or Recruitment" process. Recruitment is enhanced and made easier by thriving, growing existing businesses and remains a vital part of the economic development process. BEAR helps communities better understand why some businesses thrive, what elements attract businesses to your locale and what are barriers to business growth. BEAR has one main objective: to retain and grow the existing base of businesses and jobs in the local or regional market area.

BEAR PROCESS

BEAR Team members are prepared and trained for this unique outreach:

Step 1. Training and Confidentiality. Volunteers are trained to participate in the goals and objectives of the BEAR program. Interviewers sign confidentiality agreements to insure that the information remains private.

Step 2. Visit and Survey. Using the ExecutivePulse survey, a confidential interview (or visit) takes place with the business owner to learn of the overall health of the business.

Step 3. Data Entry. Data is entered into Executive Pulse. Copies are made for the Assessment Team.

Step 4. Assessment. The BEAR Assessment Team meets and reviews the interview & identifies areas of opportunity or need. The Assessment teams makes referral recommendations based on those needs.

Step 5. Business Reconnect. The interviewers contact the business owner with referral recommendations. Based upon the business owner's response, referrals are made.

Step 6. Referral Contact. Referral or Resource Volunteers are brought on board and given the business information to make contact.

Step 7. Data Entry. Results are entered into ExecutivePulse by referral resource.

BEAR AND IWT – Partnering to Train Montana's Small Business Workforce

The statistic 82% of all BEAR businesses were interested in obtaining an Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grant indicates the strong partnership between the IWT and BEAR. BEAR has much to offer businesses as the program stands, but small businesses across Montana have a great need for financial assistance in training incumbent workers. In addition to offering many resources to business owners, the availability of up to \$2,000 per full time employee for training is of great benefit.

As of mid-November 2014 MDLI reported: "IWT has currently granted \$424,538 (78%) and have \$68,773 in the pipeline. That leaves the state with \$48,184 (9%) available to grant." By December 19th, the funding was gone.

Incumbent Worker Training Program

Statistics from July 1, 2013—November 25, 2014

State Fiscal Year	Current Level Funding	Total Amount Granted	Percent Granted	Number of Applications Approved	Number of Workers Trained
SFY15* In first 4 months	\$541,496	\$380,142	70%	195	400
SFY14	\$541,496	\$529,614	98%	325	640



ROLLS OUT 2015 Version

ExecutivePulse, the data collection software used by Montana's BEAR Teams to track and report data, provided a new dynamic and seamless recreation of the program. While the learning curve is at times challenging, ExecutivePulse continues to offer 24 hour technical support as well as webinars and tutorials for training purposes. The new software offers incredible report options, calendar and contact integration support for Outlook users, plus countless company tracking opportunities. Recently, mobile aps were designed so now ExecutivePulse and BEAR are on the go.

GOVERNOR BULLOCK'S MAIN STREET PROJECT AND BEAR DATA

In 2013, Governor Bullock held listening sessions in key locations across Montana to learn of business needs, activities and issues. In the Main Street Montana Report that was issued in 2014, the business issues detailed could be addressed by an expanded BEAR Program. Leaders in business stated they were not aware of programs available to help them, did not know where to start, and were unsure of finance options. BEAR Teams provide this information and do so much more by building a relationship with the business owner to meet current and future needs.

2014 KEY STATISTICS FROM MONTANA'S STATEWIDE BEAR PROGRAM

The information that follows is a summary of the activities of Montana's outstanding business, expansion and retention teams.

OUTREACH STATISTICS

Montana BEAR Teams reached out to businesses of all shapes and sizes to support and retain businesses in Montana. In 2014, 295 businesses were interviewed and assessed. The chart below right details the number of visits since the program's inception in 2006.

286 BUSINESS VISITS in 2014

YEAR	VISITS
2006	142
2007	233
2008	275
2009	186
2010	205

2,134 VISITS TO DATE

YEAR	VISITS
2011	312
2012	320
2013	175
2014	295
Total to date	2,143

Outreach Visits and Action Items by County

While Outreach visits are essential to learn what needs a business may have, Action Items reported are very important. An Action Item indicates a referral within ExecutivePulse was contacted, a task was assigned, and whether or not it was completed. Note: At times, Action Items are not recorded.

2014 Participating Counties	Retention Visits	Action Items
Deer Lodge/Anaconda	3	3
Fergus	1	
Flathead	80	38
Gallatin	97	279
Granite	1	1
Lake	8	
Lewis and Clark	2	
Lincoln	4	
Missoula	39	2
Park	9	12
Powell	1	
Ravalli	4	
Silver Bow	11	2
Stillwater	10	
Sweet Grass	2	
Yellowstone	14	1

Outreach Specialists in 2014

While a BEAR Team has Assessment members, Resource and Referral members, Outreach Specialists are those that make the face-to-face contact and conduct follow-up activities with the business. Here is a list of Montana Outreach Specialists and the number of interviews conducted in 2014.

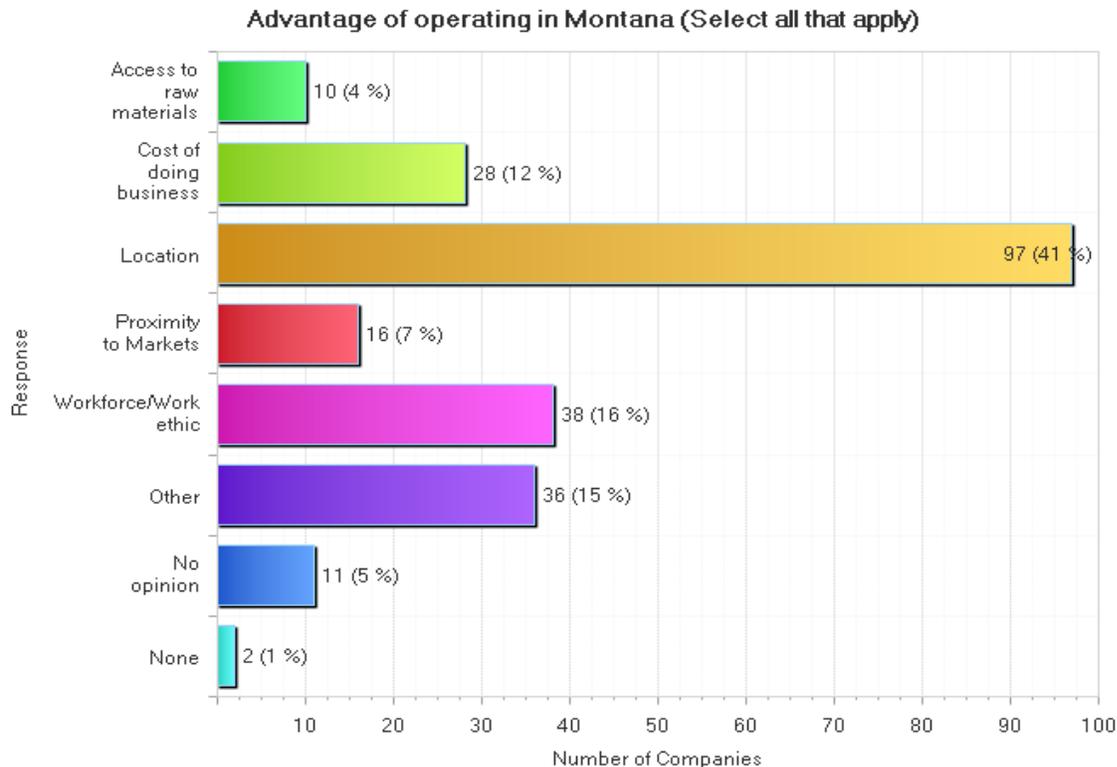
Warren Vaughan	105	Brigitta Miranda-Freer	6	Vickie Steele	3	Deborah McAtee	1	Kendall Hartman	1
Mike Jackson	73	Angie McDonald	6	Kim Morisaki	3	Allen Kawasaki	1	George Palmer	1
Mora McCarthy	19	JR Strand	6	Sarah Stewart	3	Amita Patel	1	Rick Schalk	1
Mike Williams	16	Dena Johnson	6	Rick Edwards	3	Michael D. Morrison	1	Julie Jaksha	1
Chad Moore	14	Kathy Wojcik	6	Caitlin Brandl	3	Drew Schug	1	Kristin Rutten	1
Marissa Hauge	12	Joel Bertolino	6	Michele Letendre	3	Johnette Watkins	1	Kimberly Hannon	1
Kiki Huls	12	Lynn Lagerquist	5	Lindsey Simpson	3	Michelle Twist	1		
Denise Rabe	11	Dale Mahugh	5	Jillann Knutson	3	Andy Chenard	1		
Jim Smitham	9	Marissa Heggem	5	Rachel Anderson	3	Amee Bush	1		
Deborah Derrick Gass	8	Doug Wilson	4	Chris Parson	3	Emily Shellabarger	1		
Katie Weaver	7	Jodie Rasmussen	4	Mike O'Rourke	2	Marko Lucich	1		
Gloria O'Rourke	7	Kari Martell	4	Courtney Hartman	2	Patty Cox	1		
Bill Silverman	7	Vida Wilkinson	4	Dave Laber	2	Lynn Kinnaman	1		
John Balsam	7	Todd Erickson	4	Amy Gault	2	Ann Clancy	1		
Meagan Lannan	7	Chany Reon Ockert	4	Jimmie Rude	2	Jim Davison	1		

Company Assistance Requests

- There were 165 requests for Entrepreneurial Development and Management assistance.
- 57 companies requested help with Workforce and Training.
- There were 51 requests for Marketing and Sales assistance.
- 34 companies asked for assistance with Local Government Service.
- Financing and capital only generated 17 requests.

Positive Findings

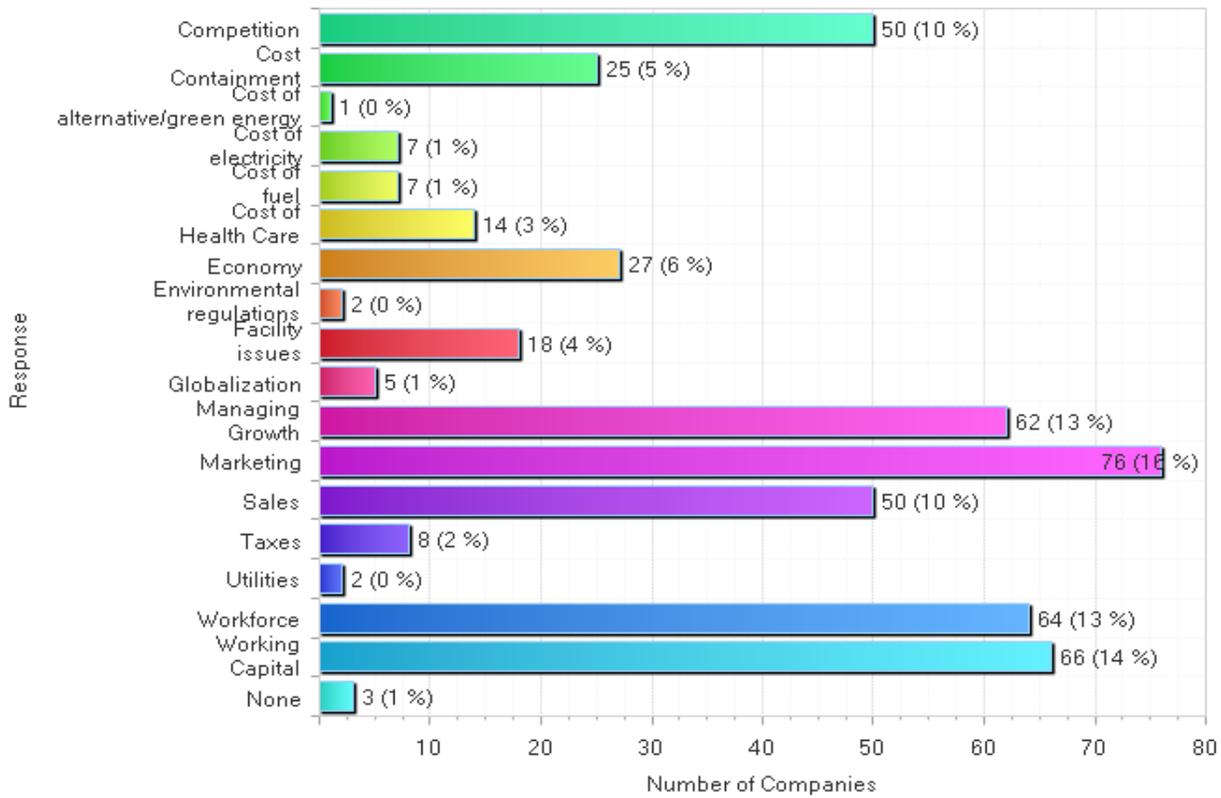
- Despite the recent recession, over 50% of companies have maintained or expanded their workforce.
- Almost 50% of companies have a formal workforce/training program in place. A third of companies even offer continuing education for their employees.
- Over 80% of respondents plan to apply for incumbent worker training grant funds.
- Only 10% of business owners/key managers are nearing retirement.
- Roughly 50% of businesses plan to upgrade their equipment within 12 months.
- Over 40% of businesses plan to expand their facility locally in the next 6-12 months.
- Only 4 businesses that were visited are currently for sale.
- Over 40% of respondents say that being physically located in the state is an advantage to their business.



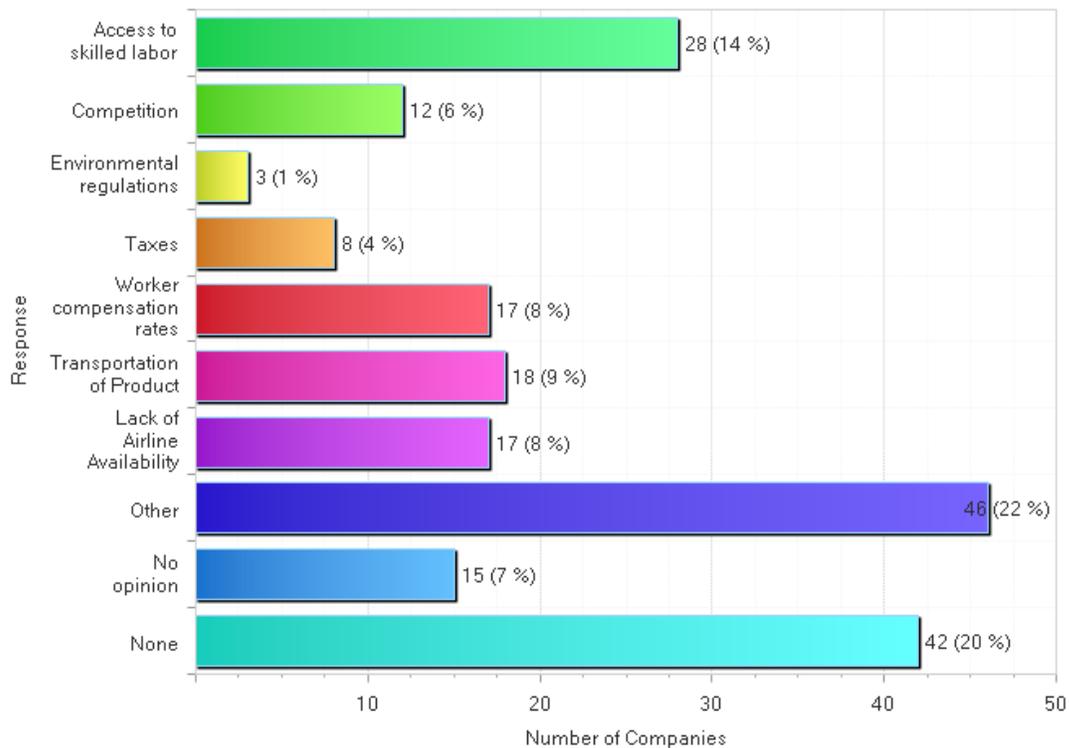
Negative Findings

- A quarter of companies say that potential employees need specific, technical skills.
- A growing concern for businesses across the state is Access to Skilled Labor.
- Over 60% of companies do not have a workforce safety plan in place.
- Over 60% of respondents do not own their facility.
- Only 13% of businesses have a succession plan.
- Less than 40% of businesses have a strategic plan.
- About 60% of businesses are not members of their Chamber of Commerce.

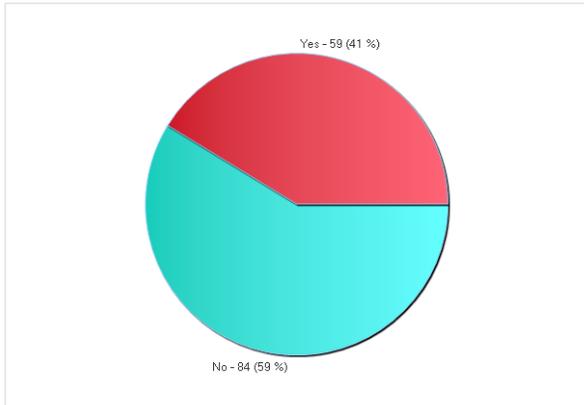
List your top three most significant business challenges



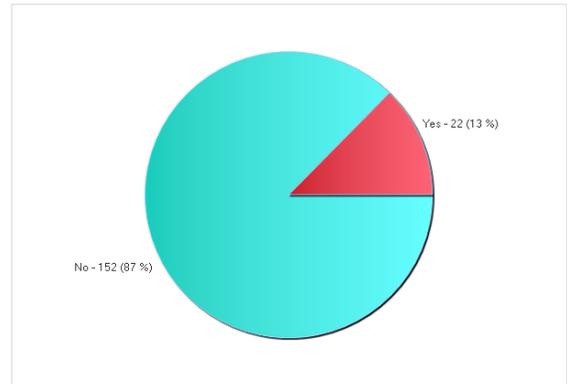
Disadvantages of doing business in Montana (Select all that apply)



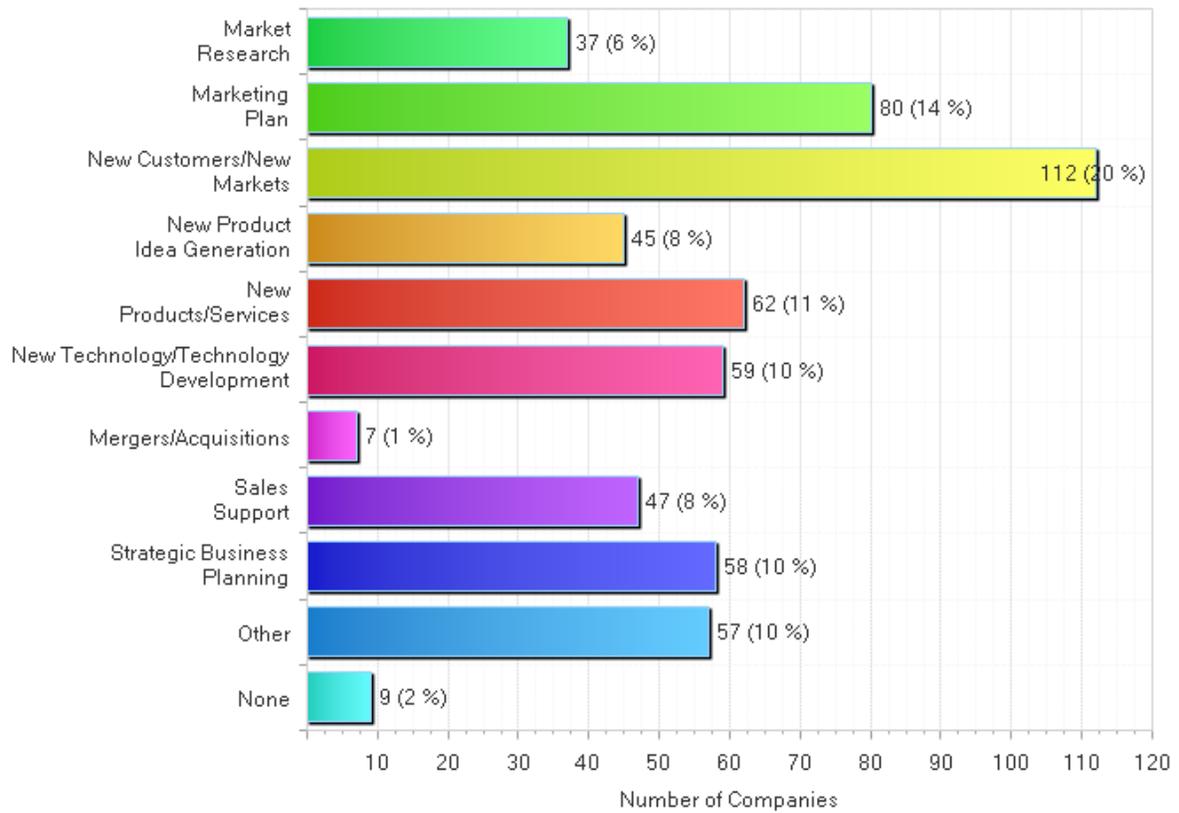
Are you planning to expand locally in the next 6 - 12 months?



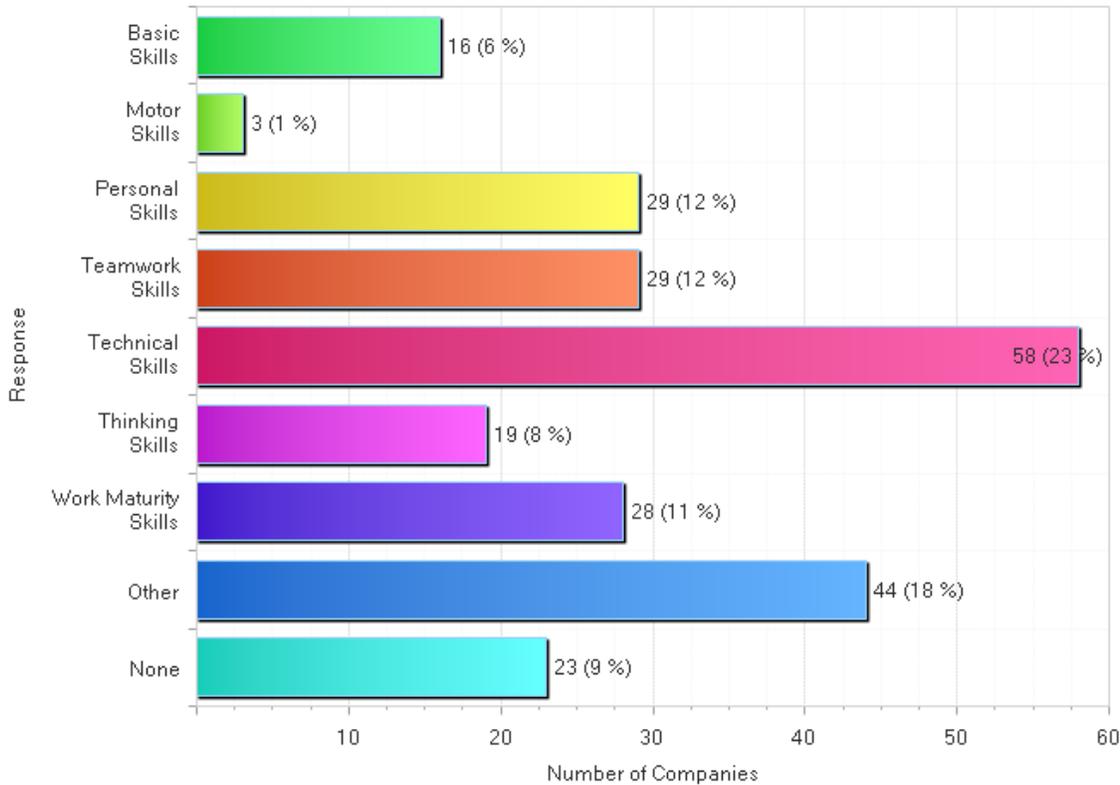
Is a formal succession plan in place?



Marketing/Sales Growth Needs (Select all that apply)



Current workforce challenges (select all that apply)



In Conclusion:

The BEAR program began in Billings in 2001 and spread to Kalispell, Great Falls and Butte. With the purchase of ExecutivePulse data access for the entire state in 2006, the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) paved the way for the statewide BEAR (Business Expansion and Retention) Program to flourish. Now working as a partnership, the GOED, Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Department of Labor and MEDA administer the statewide program.

With the advent of Incumbent Worker Training funds, the BEAR Program has become even more essential to the success of Montana's businesses and workforce. It is important, however, that BEAR Teams focus on businesses of all size, not just the small business that qualifies for IWT. BEAR Teams are learning to balance continued outreach to small businesses and the importance of maintaining relationships with Montana's larger businesses.

Thanks to incredible dedication and professionalism on the part of individual BEAR teams all across the state, businesses are getting much needed support, which plays a key role in the growth and stability of Montana's economy.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael and Gloria O'Rourke
Montana BEAR Statewide Coordinators

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