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Accelerate Montana

## *Upcoming Grant Opportunities*

### **Farmers Market Promotion Program Deadline May 2, 2023**

FMPP funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer-to-consumer market to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally agricultural products by outreach, training, and technical assistance to farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, and more. This would require a 25% match with projects ranging in various capital amounts.

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>

### **Western SARE Farmer/Rancher Research & Education Grant Program Deadline October 25, 2023**

This program focuses on advancing on-farm sustainability solutions by funding innovative producer-driven research and outreach. This grant program involves agricultural producers (main applicants) and technical advisor(s) implementing projects to address identified needs in sustainable agriculture. We recognize that producers are always innovating and improving on-farm/ranch practices. This program aims to honor producer innovation by funding on-farm research that benefits and is led by producers themselves. *Applications from \$25,000 to \$29,000.*

<https://agr.mt.gov/Topics/E-G/FRSAN-pages/Mini-Grants>

### **Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Deadline May 2**

(LFPP) funds projects that develop, coordinate and expand local and regional food business enterprises that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer-to-consumer marketing to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products. Grants can be used for the planning stages of establishing or expanding a local and regional food business enterprise or to improve or expand a food business that supports locally and regionally produced agricultural products and food system infrastructure by performing feasibility studies, market research, training and technical assistance for the business enterprise and/or for producers working with the business enterprise. A 25% match is required.

[https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2023\\_LFPP\\_RFA.pdf](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2023_LFPP_RFA.pdf)

# ARPA Projects Update

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provided State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to make necessary investments in water and sewer infrastructure. Since the announcement of these funds, EPEDC staff has worked with Cities and Counties across our region to ensure that eastern Montana communities are continuing to invest in water and sewer infrastructure.

EPEDC assisted with a number of communities with ARPA Water and Sewer Applications. These projects represent over \$1,760,000 of Minimum Allocation Funding alone.

The City of Baker's Well Waterline Upgrade project replaces existing water mains with approximately 4,600 linear feet of PVC pipe that run to four of the City's wells. The majority of the work on the project was completed in the summer of 2022 and the project is in the Close Out Phase.

Fallon County Lakeview Drive Storm Sewer Project furnish and installation storm drain piping, manholes, inlets, seeding and incidentals. This storm water sewer extension will provide for future growth in the system and allow for further development of the land adjacent to the project. The majority of the work on the project was completed in the summer of 2022 and the project is in the Close Out Phase.

The Town of Plevna's Lagoon Facility Project will rehabilitate and optimize lagoon cells that would allow them to operate more efficiently. The Town of Plevna is completing the MEPA process and will go for bids this Spring.

Fallon County North Baker Water and Sewer District Project will include creating a GIS map of the system which can be printed or accessed via a smartphone or device. A meter pit and backflow preventor is planned for installation on the District's line which is connected to the City of Baker's system at a second point of access or sale. This will allow the District's ability to grow and expand without reducing the service to existing customers. The District is completing the MEPA process and will go for bids this Spring.

Prairie County had originally planned a Fairgrounds Water Improvement Project however, instead they chose to allocate their funding to go to the Town of Terry's Sewer Project.

# AccelerateMT Outreach Forums

Eastern Montana employers are all facing the same workforce challenges. Lack of applicants, lack of housing, lack of funds for competitive pay; the list of challenges carry throughout our region, throughout our state. AccelerateMT brings training available for those applicants, to help create opportunities for growth of individuals and employers. The University of Montana houses this organization within their business incubator program and serves 5 regions in the state. Eastern Montana, being Region 5, has an outreach coordinator Tom Anderson based in Terry.

The organization held two Workforce and Training Forums in Wibaux and Terry in the month of March. This forum was focused on the challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the community. AccelerateMT opened the forum with a simple question of how each participant had been trained into their position. Many had the same answer of “on the job” training, some received degrees they were able to apply, and others had degrees in completely different fields.

It was apparent that both small communities have the same challenges of an aging workforce, decreasing population, and finding fit applicants for open positions. The strengths of the close, community-based relationships and school systems were a highlight in the discussions.

AccelerateMT is able to offer support to applicants and employers looking at rapid training courses that are 6 months or less, where the recipients enter positions with a certificate. The organization has inventoried courses that meet the criteria from accredited schools across the state in one area so that applicants can find the course and get support through the program.

AccelerateMT will work with individuals to team up with Job Services and employers to ensure jobs at the end of the course. These courses can be certificates such as CNA, CDL, Construction and more.

AccelerateMT is looking forward to working in Region 5 and adding accessible training courses to benefit the workforce. For more information, reach out to Tom Anderson [tom.anderson@mso.umt.edu](mailto:tom.anderson@mso.umt.edu).

The ultimate resource in economic development is people. It is people not capital or raw materials that develop an economy - Peter F. Druker

## Attracting Businesses to Eastern Montana

When we think about attracting businesses to Eastern Montana what does that look like? What systems do we need to have in place? The Montana Department of Commerce has a team in place who look at recruiting new businesses to Montana, and specifically Eastern Montana. Sometimes those of us who live here believe that rural America is dying but that isn't the case. New businesses look to us and our communities as new opportunities and we welcome the growth so long as our culture stays intact.

First we must identify our “shovel ready” locations. We have to make sure we have the opportunity available for when businesses come looking. What this means is to have buildings with power, water, sewer, etc. ready to go. Each community should have a list of vacant buildings as well as the buildings “shovel ready” and ensure that stakeholders are aware of the list. These listings can look more like a portfolio of your town. It's important to include what our area has to offer to make things even more enticing to new businesses. We have vast open space, beautiful landscapes, state parks, safe communities, railroad, interstates, workforce development options and a Community College. That is a long list of benefits about Eastern Montana! Eastern Plains Economic Development can help you get started on this list to send to the Department of Commerce.

In this conversation we can't forget established businesses. We must continue to reach out to ensure that our established businesses have the opportunity to create value added options to what they are already doing. Let us know if you have any ideas or questions about bringing new industry/businesses to Eastern Montana by reaching out to [EPEDC.com](http://EPEDC.com).

Next Board Meeting  
July 19, 2023

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Visit [epedc.com](http://epedc.com) for more information

The EPEDC serves the following counties and municipalities: Carter County, Dawson County, Fallon County, Prairie County and Wibaux County, as well as the Town of Ekalaka, the City of Baker, the City of Glendive, the Town of Plevna, the Town of Richey, the Town of Terry and the Town of Wibaux.