

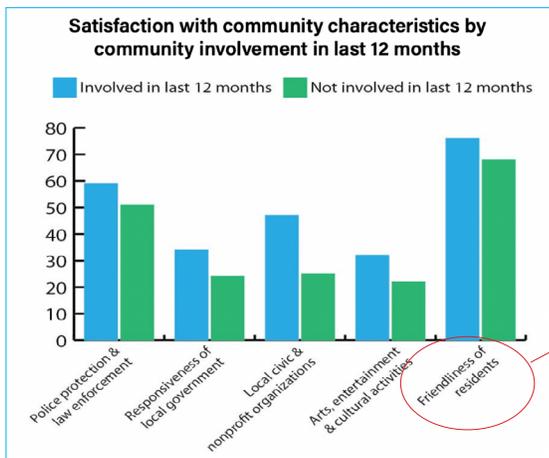
In this newsletter you'll find a recap of the June three-state PLN meeting, focused on Tara Mastel's report from the Montana State University Extension Montana Movers study, which explored who is moving to Montana and why. Also, learn more about planning for the Fall Workforce Solutions Roundtable and find out how you can help with preparations. Plus, we share resources for your communities and for you as community leaders.



Why Does Welcoming Newcomers Matter?

Our June meeting focused on Tara Mastel's report on the Montana State University Extension Montana Movers study. (See p. 2 for more detail.) Among the findings was that 71% of new residents who **strongly agree** their new community feels welcoming see themselves as still living in that community in five years. Only 20% of new residents who **strongly disagree** that their new community feels welcoming think they will still live there in five years.

This finding offers an interesting complement to a finding from last year's evaluation of survey findings from dozens of Community Reviews, conducted by Dr. Sam Mindes. A part of his analysis looked for correlations between involvement in community projects and satisfaction with specific community characteristics. Among the top statistically significant correlations with community involvement was the respondent's perception that other residents are friendly.



Note that Community Review survey respondents generally were satisfied with the friendliness of residents. But people who were involved with community projects were more satisfied than people who were not!

Could it be that being welcoming and friendly is one of the more important ways that our communities can help ensure their own vitality over time? Don't be surprised if that question comes up at our next PLN meeting on July 13!

Next PLN Meeting

The WeCAN Peer Learning Network meets on the second Wednesday of each month, 10-11 a.m. PT/11 a.m.-12 p.m. MT.

Next meeting: July 13

Topic: How Are Our Communities Welcoming Newcomers?

- Bring an example of something that your community has done or is trying that seems to work.

We will also talk about how we can all contribute to the Fall Solutions Roundtable. (Don't worry, we won't sign you up for a committee!)

Need the Zoom link for the meetings? Contact Marci Miller marcimiller@uidaho.edu.



Peer Learning Network June 2022 Meeting

Topic: Who’s Moving to Montana Communities, Why and What Happened After They Got There?

If you missed the June Peer Learning Network meeting, you missed a good one! Tara Mastel (Montana State University Extension) shared findings from the [2021 Montana Movers](#) study, based on a survey of people moving to Montana communities from 2016-January 2021. Tara’s presentation focused on the portion of survey respondents who are in the workforce (811).

On this page and the next, you’ll find some slides from the presentation and a summary of highlights shared. But this only scratches the surface, so head over and read the report for a deeper dive!

Overall, movers were more strongly motivated by quality-of-life factors than by financial reasons. One can think of the survey respondents as falling into three broad categories, though there can be overlap among them because people can move for more than one reason. Generally speaking about a third of respondents were moving back to somewhere they had lived before, about a third were moving for a job, and about a third were moving primarily for quality of life reasons. About half of respondents moved

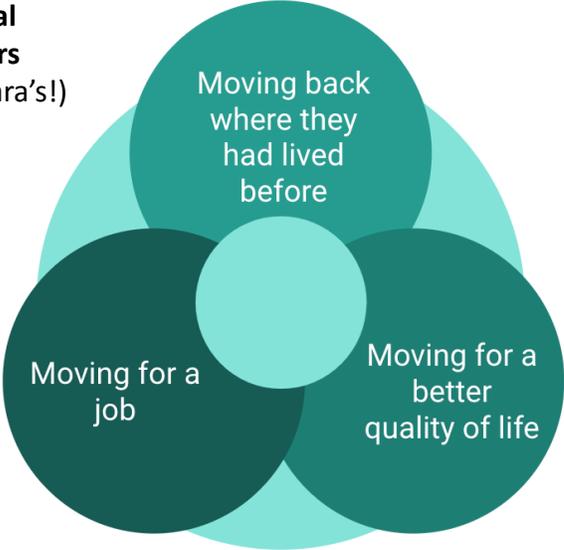
Top five reasons for moving (very important + important)

	Rank MT	MT %
To find a desirable natural environment (better access to the outdoors)	1	66
To find a less congested place to live	2	57
Take advantage of a slower pace of life	3	53
To live in a smaller community	4	51
To find a safer place to live	5	44

Bottom five reasons for moving (very important + important)

	Rank MT	MT %
To find a higher paying job	18	19
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	19	17
To take advantage of health care facilities	20	10
To buy or begin my own business	21	9
To live in a larger community	22	5

Three roughly equal “buckets” of movers (our graphic, not Tara’s!)



Peer Learning Network June 2022 Meeting Recap (cont'd)

within Montana, and about half came from out of state. Remote workers make up a relatively small slice of respondents, though more than farmers. Nearly a quarter of respondents are business owners.

Many newcomers report making an effort to engage with other community members personally and socially and to be engaged in volunteering, community projects and other civic activities.

Tara talked a bit about how newcomers can benefit rural communities that are not under tremendous growth pressure, such as replacing people who move or pass away, adding to a community's skilled workforce or cadre of business owners, bringing kids to keep schools vibrant and open, sustaining the local economy and bringing fresh energy and ideas.

She detailed the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of whether they are welcome in the community and whether they think they will be living there in five years. The perception of a welcoming community is strongly correlated with an intention to stay in the community, while the perception of an unwelcoming community is not.

As she talked about these benefits, she also advised communities to pay attention to hospitality, try to see their community through the eyes of visitors, stay open to new ideas and try curiosity when times get tough.

Almost half moved from a different Montana community

Where did you move from?

- 48% from within Montana
- 49% from out of state
 - From 39 states
 - From 19 other countries

State moved from	# of people
California	57
Washington	57
Colorado	39
Idaho	21
Oregon	21
Texas	20
Georgia	18
Wyoming	16
Utah	15

Source: 2021 Montana State University Extension Newcomers Study.
Slide credit: Sabre Moore

Key economic characteristics

<p>I work remotely for someone else</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9% respondent • 6% spouse/partner 	<p>23% currently own a business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66% already existed • 34% created it 	<p>6% currently own a farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% already existed • 36% created it
---	--	---

Many newcomers engage with community residence and take part in activities, including volunteering

Engagement Activity	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Worked on a community or regional project	21%	34%	29%	16%
Attended a public meeting to discuss town or school affairs	28%	35%	25%	12%
Attended a club or organizational meeting (not including meetings for work)	24%	30%	24%	22%
Had long-time community residents over to your home				
Visited long-time community residents at their home	9%	16%	34%	41%
Had friends from your community over to your home	9%	12%	34%	45%
Visited friends from your community at their home	6%	11%	37%	46%
Met people in public settings to socialize	6%	12%	35%	47%
Volunteered	17%	28%	32%	23%
Attended religious services	40%	20%	11%	30%
Exchanged small favors or help with a neighbor (for example, shoveled snow or cooked a meal)	7%	10%	36%	47%

WEBINARS

& Other Resources

Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) Blog Posts on Digital Economic Development and the Future of Work

CORI is a nonprofit that partners with rural leaders across the country to build digital economies that support scalable entrepreneurship and lead to more tech jobs in rural America. Its [What's Happening in Rural America](#) blog is chock full of great insight, examples and advice for rural leaders. Especially current: a series-in-progress drawn from a [new CORI study on tech training and employment in rural America](#). Speaking of CORI reports, there's [a whole slew of them](#) you can dive into to inform your rural digital economy ecosystem strategies and help you better visualize the challenges facing rural communities. Oh yeah, they have [webinars](#), too.

Latest GNAR Webinar Series on Post-COVID Resilience in the Tourism Industry

The pandemic has affected so many aspects of Western states' tourism industry, leaving many businesses still learning to adapt. To build a more resilient tourism industry, the Utah Office of Tourism and the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism have launched the [Red Emerald Resilience Training Program](#). The program shares success stories, best

practices, and lessons learned, with a Utah focus, but with much to offer to us in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Access the recordings of past webinars and register for future sessions [here](#).

Want to Get Better About Imagining and Being Ready for the Future?

[Jane McGonigal](#) is a world-renowned designer of alternate reality games and Director of Games Research and Development at the [Institute for the Future](#). Her book, [Imaginable: How to See the Future Coming and Feel Ready](#), is a fantastic resource for cultivating future thinking skills and using social future simulations to boost imagination and preparedness.

Want to get started without reading the book? McGonigal's 17-minute TEDX talk, [The future is dark, and that's a good thing](#), describes three future thinking skills and simple exercises you can do to develop them.

15% WeCAN Discount for Online Courses

Use the code WECAN for a 15% discount on all of the [Harbinger Consultancy's online courses](#) for community and economic development professionals, community leaders,

land trusts, downtown organizations and other groups focused on community well-being.

Fall courses begin September-November. Register by July 15 to take advantage of additional savings with early registration discounts.

New this fall is a course that Kathleen Minogue (Crowdfund Better & WeCAN Community Bootcamp presenter) and Michele Archie (Harbinger Consultancy & PLN facilitator) are collaborating to deliver. [The New Community Project Roadmap: Lessons from Crowdfunding for Repeatable Success in Building and Sustaining Community Initiatives](#) offers lessons from successful crowdfunding that you can apply regardless of whether or not you decide to crowdfund. Bring your current challenge, or a project or initiative that you're incubating to this interactive course.

Broadwater County, MT, Begins Community Review

The organizing team for the Broadwater County community review is hitting the ground running. Their resident survey is just about out the door, and their first listening sessions are scheduled for October 11. Go Broadwater County! For more information, contact Rebecca Meyers with the Montana Economic Developers Association (medaexec@gmail.com).



Fall Workforce Solutions Roundtable

The WeCAN Peer Learning Network will be taking up another sticky issue shared across Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and beyond, in our next Solutions Roundtable coming up in September (date TBD).

The Housing Solutions Roundtable was a popular event, generating new ideas, inspiration and resources for tackling housing issues in small towns and rural communities. In September, we will turn our attention to employment in a Workforce Solutions Roundtable.

Like our first Solutions Roundtable, this fall's event will be structured around keynote speakers and community/program success stories that offer insights and models for action that work in rural communities. And we'll build in more time

for breakout groups to explore solutions in greater depth.

Like housing, rural workforce issues have a variety of facets. Availability of affordable, quality housing is among them; so are worker shortages generally and in specific fields, mismatch of skills and jobs, training and matching trainees to jobs, child and elder care, remote work, jobs for all community members including people with disabilities, and more.

We have just begun shaping the program, and welcome your participation in a variety of ways:

- Help us identify examples of workforce solutions that have worked in rural communities.
- Suggest keynote speakers.

- Join the planning team.
- Volunteer to help out as a breakout room facilitator or note taker.
- Suggest solutions-focused resources to share with roundtable participants.

We will talk about preparations for the Workforce Solutions Roundtable during the July 13 PLN meeting. If you can't make it, but still want to be involved, please contact Michele Archie at michele@harbingerconsult.com or 808.389.9995.



Questions about the Peer Learning Network? Contact your state facilitator:

Idaho: Melissa Hamilton mbhamilton@uidaho.edu

Montana: Rebecca Meyers rebecca@medamembers.org

Wyoming: Juliet Daniels juliet.daniels@uwyo.edu

Want to join the monthly PLN meetings?

Want to join the monthly meetings? Contact Marci Miller marcimiller@uidaho.edu

Marci can help if you're not on the PLN meetings email list and calendar appointments—or don't know if you are.

Newsletter contributors

Michele Archie • Julie Daniels • Melissa Hamilton • Rebecca Meyers • Marci Miller • Elizabeth Sloan • Lorie Higgins

Want to add something to the next newsletter? Contact Michele Archie michele@harbingerconsult.com

WeCAN collaborating organizations

Idaho Rural Partnership • Montana Economic Developers Association • Wyoming Business Council • Extension faculty at University of Idaho, Montana State University & University of Wyoming