

# MONTANA

ASSETS: **\$4.2 BILLION**

REVENUE: **\$1 BILLION**

MEMBERS: **588,000**

JOBS CREATED: **14,500**



## MONTANA CO-OPS AT A GLANCE

Co-ops in Montana are working to build a better world by creating quality jobs, building community wealth, protecting the environment, reducing poverty and strengthening the local economy.

### MONTANA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION (MECA)

As the statewide association, MECA represents 25 electric co-ops that collectively serve more than 400,000 Montanans.

### MONTANA CO-OP DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The recipient of a \$200,000 Rural Cooperative Development Grant in 2014, the Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) is the only statewide center in Montana that supports cross-sector cooperative business development and education.



MCDC Executive Director Janice Brown, right, and MCDC Communication Specialist Guy Gregory at the "Invest in Success" Small Business Conference on the campus of Montana State University.

## MONTANA TOP CO-OPS BY SECTOR

CREDIT UNIONS: **63**

AGRICULTURE: **54**

ELECTRIC: **25**

UTILITY: **24**

INSURANCE: **12**

TELEPHONE: **8**

EDUCATION: **7**

## ABOUT CO-OPS

According to federally-supported research by the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, co-ops inject \$3 trillion into the U.S. economy every year. Located in every state and every Congressional district in the U.S., co-ops create millions of jobs and offer solutions to meet challenging public policy issues—from affordable housing to early childhood learning. They spur economic growth in underserved rural America; empower individuals, families and communities; and ensure that Americans have access to high-quality goods and services at competitive prices from businesses they trust.

## MONTANA CO-OP DEVELOPMENT CENTER GROWS OPPORTUNITIES

Homestead Organics Farm in Hamilton, Montana is a member of the Loyal to Local Community Agriculture Cooperative, a new cooperative formed with assistance from the nonprofit Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) in Great Falls.

“Growers in the Bitterroot Valley wanted to ensure their products would remain in their local markets and be available to their friends and neighbors, while at the same time educating them as to where those products are coming from,” said Janice Brown, MCDC Executive Director. “We were excited to lend our experience and guidance in getting Loyal to Local off the ground.”

Loyal to Local was introduced to Under Secretary for USDA Rural Development Lisa Mensah during a recent meeting with MCDC. The cooperative, whose goal is to connect farmers and add value to local agricultural products through community engagement and education, is an example of the goal of the USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative.

MCDC is able to support cooperatives using grant funds from USDA Rural Development's Rural Cooperative Development Grant program.



Ian and Ellen are among Montana farmers that source the Hamilton Farmers Market, which offers locally grown non-GMO produce to the community.

MCDC uses these funds to work with new and existing cooperatives by providing guidance and technical support for co-op development.

The cooperative development specialist of MCDC works not only with agriculture producers but with manufacturing, transportation, housing, tourism, and any other cooperatives operating or wishing to operate in Montana.

The guidance MCDC provided to Loyal to Local and Homestead Organics Farm to start a Kickstarter campaign helped them raise funds to break ground on a poultry processing facility in early August. By late October the facility will allow local small growers to butcher and legally sell their poultry in retail and commercial markets.

Founded in 1916, the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) CLUSA International is the trade association for cooperative businesses in the U.S. and an international development organization active in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. For 100 years, NCBA CLUSA has advanced, promoted and defended co-op enterprise, highlighting the impact that co-ops have in bettering the lives of individuals, families and communities.

**NCBA CLUSA**  
The National Cooperative Business Association • CLUSA International

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