



Big Sky, Big Leadership

A statewide leadership class offered
in Broadwater County.



Program Overview

What is *Big Sky, Big Leadership*?

Big Sky, Big Leadership is a statewide community leadership initiative developed by MSU Extension and offered at the county level. It seeks to address the need for leaders in rural communities and help participants develop skills, increase understanding of local community dynamics and improve awareness of local issues.

Why is a leadership program needed?

Communities with strong citizen involvement have access to more resources and can capitalize on more opportunities. Research shows that 1 in every 22 adults in Montana needs to hold a leadership position (president, secretary or treasurer) to keep our communities operating. However, we know that it takes even more volunteers to keep an organization running. Rural communities face significant challenges that range from struggling economic conditions to changing demographics to quality of life. These are complex issues that can't be easily solved and require innovative leaders to look and think in new ways. This program works to address the need for leaders in the community and help adults learn leadership and personal skills.

What are the program components?

There are three components of the program:

1. Leadership Skill Development – This is the fundamental part of the program. Leaders must increase their own capacity to successfully deal with growing complex issues. This begins with core leadership competencies. Sessions will use interactive techniques to engage participants in a variety of topics including personality styles, strategic leadership, communication, conflict management, generational differences, leadership styles, effective meetings and facilitation skills.
2. Community Experience – The community experience provides participants with the opportunity to increase their awareness and understanding of the community resources and issues. Each session provides either an on-site visit to a location or guest speaker or panel to present critical information on a topic. Proposed community experiences include tourism, local entrepreneurship, agriculture, manufacturing, local government, education, health care and mining.
3. Group Project - The third core component is the group project. Participants are challenged to plan, implement and evaluate a project that benefits the community and engages all participants. The purpose of the project is to utilize the skills learned and to reflect on knowledge gained through the community experiences to create a project that positively impacts the community.

What is the level of commitment?

This is a cohort-based program. Participants are selected through an application process. The program is comprised of monthly day-long sessions that take place from September through May. Having the same cohort throughout the entire program helps establish trust and relationships among participants, which helps build their social network between each other, strengthens their bond and understanding of the community.

For more information, contact MSU Extension in Broadwater County at 406-266-9242, allison.kosto@montana.edu or visit <https://www.montana.edu/extension/broadwater/>.