

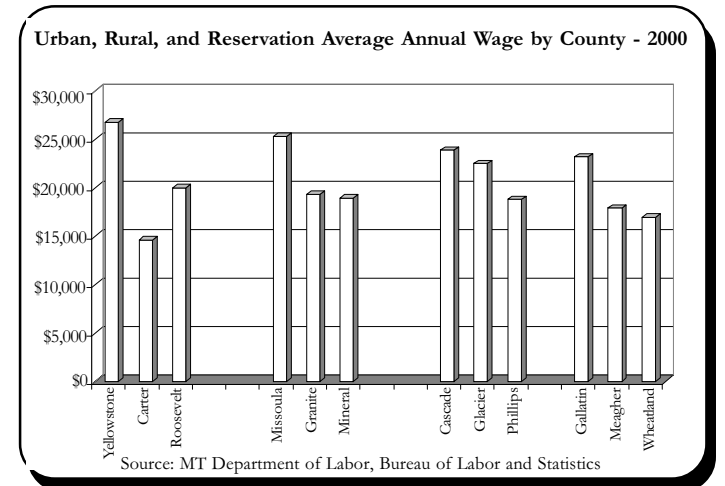
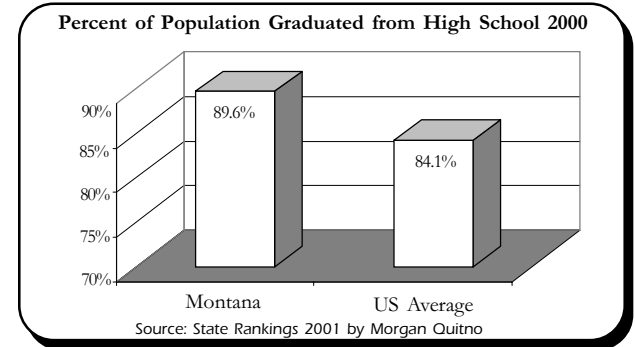
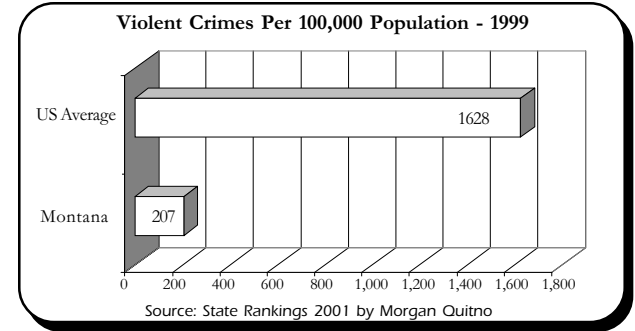


Shared Economic Opportunity

Principle 2: Provide the opportunity for all Montana citizens to share economic prosperity and a high quality of life in all regions of the state.

Even in times of strong economic growth, there is a sizable gap between job availability and economic prosperity in Montana's urban, rural, and Reservation areas. Several areas in the state are struggling with urban sprawl and population growth, while others are in search of basic economic development. Our goal is opportunity for all urban, rural and Native American people while maintaining our quality of life that includes a "Montana" natural environment, a strong educational system, affordable housing, well-maintained infrastructure, and safe neighborhoods.

The state's business development efforts will build upon regional strengths, and will include regional partnerships. We will partner with regions to identify economic development challenges, assess local infrastructure needs, develop local plans to meet those needs, and improve regional economic development efforts. All of these efforts will be accomplished while embracing our "Montana Way of Life."



Balanced Statewide Prosperity





Every region of the state faces unique challenges and opportunities. One economic development strategy does not work for all regions, but each region must be prepared for industries and businesses best suited to their particular area. However, basic needs are required for all industries – access to energy, basic infrastructure, business-friendly communities and a skilled and trained workforce.

It's difficult enough for Montana to compete with other states and countries without having to waste resources competing within its boundaries.

We will facilitate regional cooperation and recognize that new job opportunities within one political boundary will help potential employees and their communities in neighboring areas.

Goals

-  Assess economic opportunity challenges that are common to geographic regions and develop strategies to address challenges on a regional level.
-  Facilitate development of partnerships based on geographic advantages within regions for business creation, growth and attraction.

Strategies


- 1** Develop state-sponsored advisory councils to coordinate and communicate with regional leaders and policy makers to identify regional economic growth objectives and opportunities.
- 2** Define and coordinate state, regional and local economic development organizations' roles and responsibilities.
- 3** Create and implement processes that promote regional economic development.



A state's ability to compete in attracting and growing knowledge-intensive, high technology or entrepreneurial businesses depends on its workforce. Our educational systems must produce workers with the skills and abilities to thrive in the new competitive landscape. High quality K-16 public education is imperative.

Montana is fortunate to have a historically strong educational system. For years, we have ranked among the top states in K-12 student performance. Montanans value quality education. Education is a foundation of our economy. We will take specific steps to ensure that Montana's education system is capable of preparing our citizens for the 21st Century.

Goal

-  Ensure that all Montanans have access to a high quality K-16 education.

Strategies

- 1** Lead a broad-based, focused study to determine the needs of the state's education system and the funding it requires to maintain excellence. Reform the funding mechanism for education to be more fair and effective.
- 2** Work with the Board of Public Education and the Board of Regents to ensure a seamless system that allows movement between the K-12 system, colleges of technology, community colleges and universities.
- 3** Develop programs that encourage new teachers to stay in Montana, and encourage experienced teachers to remain in the classrooms.
- 4** Assist in programs that educate Montanans on the importance of a strong K-16 education system to the state's economy.




Quality of life is essential for a competitive economy. Successful development in the new economy requires an understanding of the mobility of resources, both financial and human. Businesses, employees and entrepreneurs can choose to relocate if they are dissatisfied with the quality of life in any particular area.

Montana has an unparalleled quality of life. In a recent survey of Montana businesses, quality of life was rated as the number one reason for locating in Montana. In addition, Montanans rate scenic beauty and open space, a safe place to raise their families, a good place for children to learn values, close-knit neighborly communities and outdoor recreation opportunities as the top reasons they live here. Montana must maintain and enhance the quality of life it provides.

We recognize that without a vibrant, competitive economy, we cannot support education, arts, basic infrastructure and the health & human services that are an integral component of a high quality of life. Our goal is to create economic growth while embracing our family-oriented communities.

Goal

-  Promote sustainable economic growth that balances the economic needs of Montanans with maintaining a healthy and attractive environment.

Strategies


- 1** Promote regional economic development to ensure that economic growth; local values, and quality of life are supported throughout the state.
- 2** Support policies and legislation that ensure continued support for Montana's public spaces.
- 3** Maintain a high quality K-12 educational and post-secondary education system.
- 4** Maintain the safety and security of Montana residents.
- 5** Enhance state programs and use the State of Montana's Washington D.C. office to gain support for improving access to affordable housing in Montana.



Approximately one out of every fourteen Montanans is living on one of our seven Reservations in Montana. Reservation unemployment, poverty, school dropout rates, and welfare levels are significantly higher than the Montana average. Basic infrastructure on our Reservations must be improved. All Montanans are significantly impacted by the economies of their neighboring Reservations. Improving the economies of Reservations means improving the economy for all of Montana.

In 1999, the Montana Legislature passed HB 670, which established the State Tribal Economic Development Commission (STEDC). This Commission is tasked with conducting a comprehensive assessment of the economic needs and priorities of each Reservation and providing recommendations for accelerating economic development on these Reservations. It is important that the STEDC work continues and the recommendations of this Commission are supported. The goals and strategies outlined in this framework will complement the work of STEDC.

Goal

-  Work with Native Americans to expand economic development opportunities on each of the seven Reservations in partnership with Tribal governments and the Federal government.

Strategies

- 1** Support STEDC in the development of detailed economic development priorities for all seven Reservations. Use these recommendations to prioritize the state's role in supporting economic development on Reservations.
- 2** Work to reduce government dependency by including Reservations in each of the goals and strategies described throughout this plan. Emphasize strategies that provide educational and workforce training programs and technical assistance for developing businesses.
- 3** Work government-to-government to promote and expand heritage tourism opportunities, particularly focused on the upcoming Lewis & Clark bicentennial.
- 4** Coordinate with Tribes to promote business development on the Reservations.

