

To address these conditions and concerns, four strategies were developed:

**Strategy 1: Families' basic needs are met.**

**What will be done?**

1. Agencies will network to address gaps in basic needs—food, shelter, and clothing. The network will focus on:
  - Collecting and disseminating information on basic needs assistance programs
  - Identifying better ways for agencies to work together
2. Provide more resources for area food banks/pantries.
  - Establish food bank pantries on reservations where currently none exist.
  - Help assure that food banks and pantries have adequate resources to meet basic needs, including food, health, and hygiene items.
3. Advocate for energy assistance program.
  - Encourage understanding that utilities and LIEAP assistance programs should be advocated for.
4. Develop and expand resource management classes on family finances/budgets, cooking, etc. to assist families in managing limited resources.

**To meet what needs?**

Many families in the region do not have the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. Despite the efforts of many different public and private agencies, gaps in the 'safety net' exist throughout the region and are increasing due to budget reductions. When basic needs are not met on a regular stable basis, parents cannot look to the future and find it difficult to strengthen and nurture their families.

**To achieve what ends?**

Fill gaps in service across the region, so that the basic needs of people living in poverty are met, so that they in turn have the potential of focusing on actions that will move them out of poverty.

**For the benefit of whom?**

All families living in poverty in Northcentral Montana.

**Strategy 2: More people are successful in raising, nurturing, and cherishing their multi-generational families and increase their voices in their communities.**

***What will be done?***

1. Create a network among programs and agencies that serve families in Northcentral Montana. Initial focus will be on emotional and physical abuse.
2. Create family resource networks, or “Voice Houses” that can function both as advocacy support systems and resource networks providing information and connections between families and resources.
3. Develop a multi-year asset building community development program modeled after the “Helping Kids Succeed - Alaska Style” program and the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement. (See also Community Strategy 1 and Education Strategy 3)

***To meet what needs?***

Many families living in poverty do not have the energy or the knowledge to support each other emotionally, to seek available help, or to take actions that will help them change their situation. They need advocacy and information about resources and support to create change.

***To achieve what ends?***

Strong families are critical for carrying on values, ethics, culture, and social stability from generation to generation, and for providing a safe place for all. When families are successful, the result is strong-spirited people who are positive and hopeful, people who believe in their dignity and feel in control of their lives. Strong families promote richness of spirit and spiritual health and combat the poverty of spirit that underlies many other types of poverty. Strong families can also move out of poverty and interrupt the cycle of generational poverty.

***For the benefit of whom?***

All families living in poverty in Northcentral Montana.

**Strategy 3: Provide more families with affordable, accessible, quality child care programs.**

**What will be done?**

1. Improve the quality of childcare in the region by advancing the professionalism of childcare providers.
  - Provide incentives for child care providers to complete professional development programs. Incentives could include:
    - Back-up care (while providers attending courses)
    - Financial incentives and rebates
  - “Back Office Support”—Packaged business services to support child care businesses (administrative support consortium) –e.g., tax accountant, attorney, insurance, advertising
  - Curriculum development support (site based at child care locations)
2. Provide community, employer, and parent education about work/family issues, types of care available, and recruit and respond in areas of need.
  - Develop model facilities in a variety of settings and have model facilities become mentors for others
  - Provide consumer education on how to select good child care environments
  - Expand on existing public relations and information programs for quality care programs

**To meet what needs?**

Access to childcare is essential for working parents and Northcentral Montana does not have enough day care facilities. Without childcare, parents usually cannot work. This is particularly true for low-income families, many of which are single parent households.

The overall quality of the available programs in Northcentral Montana is also poor, as few providers participate in the state assisted continuing education program or meet more than the minimum licensing requirements for health and safety (on some reservations there is no agency to license child care programs). Placement of children in high quality and safe childcare with true learning opportunities will help the children have long term success in school.

**To achieve what ends?**

Creation of new childcare programs and improvement of existing programs to provide high quality early childhood learning programs, which have been shown to help economically disadvantaged children succeed academically and socially.

**For the benefit of whom?**

All families living in poverty in Northcentral Montana.

**Strategy 4: Increase successful outcomes for youth.**

***What will be done?***

1. Employ research-based prevention programs and integrate them into the public schools and other programs serving youth to reduce the problem youth behaviors of teen pregnancy, substance abuse, violence (including self-harm) and delinquency.
  - Programs should be based on community resource assessments
  - Programs should build protective factors and reduce risk factors in the school, community, family and individual/peer domains
  - Programs should be evaluated to demonstrate impact on targeted risk & protective factors and targeted behaviors
  - Programs should be developmentally and culturally appropriate

***To meet what needs?***

Indicators of the serious problems for children and youth are that Montana has the third highest death rate for children in the country, and the death rate for teens from accidents, homicide, and suicide is 1.6 times the national rate.<sup>6</sup> Drug and other addictive behaviors affect youth throughout the region, and many teens are single parents without the skills to raise and nurture a family.

***To achieve what ends?***

Youth need support now, so that they can raise healthy families in the future.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Children and youth living in poverty in Northcentral Montana

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<sup>6</sup> Kids Count (2003)

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The plan for funding these strategies is described in detail in the following Chapter 6 and in Appendix F, but the following actions related to Children, Youth and Families were identified as being of highest priority for implementing with the help of NWAFF funds:

**Priority Actions**

<i>Action</i>	<i>NWAFF Funds Requested</i>	<i>Total Ten Year Budget</i>
<i>2.1 Create a network among programs and agencies that serve families in Northcentral Montana. Initial focus will be on emotional and physical abuse</i>	\$97,750	\$195,500
<i>2.2 Create family resource networks, or “Voice Houses” that can function both as advocacy support systems and resource networks providing information and connections between families and resources</i>	\$304,150	\$1,383,500
<i>3.1 Improve the quality of childcare in the region by advancing the professionalism of childcare providers</i>	\$164,700	\$1,383,000
<i>3.2 Develop model facilities in a variety of settings and have model facilities become mentors for others</i>		

## Strategic Direction - Economy: To build and live in a sound and healthy regional economy.

The fuel that makes accomplishing the other strategies possible is a healthy economy that provides the financial resources and stability needed to support community change and is a source of hope and economic progress for individuals and families. The economy of Northcentral Montana has taken many hits in the last twenty years:

- Large manufacturing and mining have mostly left the region.
- Farming communities have suffered from advances in technology requiring fewer workers, the growth of corporate farming, and the conversion of productive land to land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), both of which have reduced the demand for equipment and seed.
- Years of drought have added insult to injury, reducing both the quality and quantity of grain produced, and causing ranchers to shrink or eliminate their herds.
- The population has been aging, and some parts of the region have actually lost population as young adults find they cannot make a living here and move away (a demographic description of the region is found in Appendix C). Montana is in 50<sup>th</sup> place out of the 50 states with an average annual salary of \$25,194.<sup>7</sup>
- Capital for new or expanding businesses and loans for individuals is hard to get. For many individuals in the region this is amplified by the difficulty Indians have in gaining recognition of the equity in homes on reservations.

- The state tax structure, with high individual income tax and capital gain rates, discourages new business development and tax reform has been difficult to achieve.

The economy of the three reservations has never been healthy since they were first established one hundred or more years ago. All three reservations have vigorous economic development efforts underway now, but the barriers to developing a healthy economic infrastructure of laws and regulations, which support business, workers with needed skills, and a marketplace, which will buy the goods and services, are severe. The issues of racism, loss of culture, and poor health described earlier must be worked on at the same time that economic development is pursued for the economy on the reservations to grow.

The Strategy Team developed strategies for the Community Ventures Project, which will support and take advantage of ongoing economic development efforts and philosophies, which are being vigorously undertaken by local and tribal governments, economic development corporations and businesses in the regions. A study funded by the Great Falls Development Authority in 2002 identified three specific industries as being particularly suited for development in Cascade County and surrounding areas:

- *Depot and Repair of Time Sensitive Products*, which includes the repair and testing of high-value electronic equipment and/or machinery parts and the warehousing of high-value electronic and machinery equipment parts that require guaranteed overnight or one to two day shipment to customers.

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<sup>7</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001.

- *Time Sensitive Medical And Veterinarian Products And Services*, which includes the warehousing, distribution and shipping of emergency, refrigerated, or frozen medical items requiring overnight delivery.
- *Business and Information Services*, including administrative and customer support service centers. This niche is differentiated from the others by requiring well-educated employees with typically two or four year college degrees and a high level of technical, administrative or professional skills.

These take advantage of the geographic location of Great Falls and the International Airport, which has considerable capacity for added cargo services (Federal Express is already located there.)

Other areas of economic development being pursued regionally by the tribes and other local entities, but which depend on the private sector for implementation are:

- Value added agriculture,
- Marketing cooperatives,
- Cultural and historical tourism,
- Small business development that can be supported both through local and web based sales, and
- Construction of housing and other building.

An epiphany for many Coalition members was the realization that the economic well being of Great Falls, of farming communities, and the tribes is inter-connected. No part of the region will thrive, unless the whole thrives. Indians are a major potential market, bringing millions of tribal government and individual dollars into the region. Farming communities, Great

Falls, and the global Internet market provide a much larger marketplace for Indian businesses than any one reservation can provide.

In addition, water ties the region together, and water compacts and water projects being carried out by the tribes offer opportunities for job development, housing development, future irrigation and an improving economy for all – if other obstacles to working together can be removed.<sup>8</sup>

A core assumption by the Team was that developing jobs was not enough. People needed the skills to hold and thrive in jobs, or develop their own small businesses; and the work, whether through an employer or through self-employment, had to provide an income to support a family, and it had to fill gaps or expand the regional economy.

Many of the members of the Strategy Team charged with developing economic strategies are professionals involved in economic development for the region or are business owners. In this Community Ventures effort however, they focused on strategies that will break down barriers for individuals trying to take advantage of new economic opportunities (generated by economic development activities outside of Community Ventures) and breaking down the barriers for communities who do not have the infrastructure or the experience to take advantage of opportunities. In other words, these are strategies that the Coalition believes will benefit people currently living in poverty by enabling them and their communities to participate in and benefit from economic development, in ways that they would otherwise not be able to. In this context, five economic strategies were established:

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<sup>8</sup> The crumbling of barriers may be beginning. For example, Ft. Belknap has recently bought the empty meat packing plant in Malta.

**Strategy 1: By 2013, everyone will possess the skills needed to get and keep a job.**

**What will be done?**

1. Develop and build on existing academic programs to train people in the skills/trades needed by private businesses and public agencies.
  - Construction arts curriculum which is under development at MSU Northern
  - Home building at Stonechild and Blackfeet community colleges
  - Health professional
  - Law enforcement academy
  - Tribal and non-tribal firefighting

(See also Housing Strategy 1 and Education Strategy 3)
2. Develop training programs for soft skills.
  - Use existing experts for training of soft skills.
  - Use existing social groups such as Boy Scouts or Boys and Girls Clubs to offer workshops to youth in soft skills.
  - Start soft skills programs in the schools, beginning in the primary grades/soft skills asset inventory in grades K-12.
  - Teach people how to identify the skills they have and how to market them. (Individual asset-mapping)
3. Offer easily implemented and customized trainings for businesses, both for existing employees and new employees, as well as for employers.
  - Do a needs assessment to determine what the training needs of employers are.
  - Address workforce development of existing and potential businesses.
  - Workforce training bill in legislature may offer opportunities
  - Offer help in being a more effective employer
4. Develop training programs for young adults at risk of failure, who need job skills training, follow-up support, and job placement.

***To meet what needs?***

Unemployment and underemployment in Northcentral Montana often occurs because people do not have the needed skills. Young adults, in particular, do not have the skills to fill out applications, interview for a job, or have an understanding of the work ethic or 'rules' of how to keep a job once they have one. Others do not have the expertise or skills for the jobs that are available, for example in health care or the trades. In addition, employers do not have the skills to manage and help their employees develop, so one often hears that jobs are available but there is no one there to hire.

These actions will build on and enhance existing efforts by both public and private agencies, as well as educational institutions to prepare people to hold and thrive in jobs that already exist in the area or that will exist in the future through economic development efforts.

***To achieve what ends?***

Increased permanent employment on the reservations and an improved workforce, particularly in rural areas.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Unemployed and under-employed low-income persons.

***Strategy 2: By 2013, Northcentral Montana will have found new, innovative, and environmentally sustainable ways of using its human, natural, and renewable resources to create wealth for its residents.***

***What will be done?***

1. Create training and job programs for local residents across the region to support the water resource development now possible due to the Rocky Boy and Ft. Belknap water compacts and the Blackfeet water project.
  - Needs to include jobs and businesses in support of water development such as hauling/trucking
  - Need to assure that local residents are hired
  - Look ahead to the jobs that will be made possible in the long term as a result of improved use of water

2. Advocate on state and federal levels.
  - Support Homestead Economic Opportunity Act which includes
  - Venture capital fund
  - Student grants
  - Rural investment tax credit
3. Develop models, such as co-ops, for developing and marketing of regional products.
  - Support value added strategies, such as alternative energy sources and wood products
  - Another potential project is development of greenhouses
  - Potential partner is the Cooperative Development Center, which could provide help in financing
4. Carryout planning studies and other related activities that enable the development and maintenance of new and existing irrigation systems that allow production of farm commodities and water conservation. (This will in turn lead to new opportunities such as described in Strategy 3.)

***To meet what needs?***

The word “wealth” in this strategy does not just mean financial well-being, but the other forms of well-being envisioned in this plan related to healthy families and communities. The region has enormous resources upon which to build, including large pools of people available for work on the reservations, strong cultural traditions, beautiful and potentially productive land and water, a substantial agricultural and ranching base, as well as, people in all communities with skills and experience waiting to be tapped. We must build on our strengths and focus on the values we hold in common, and learn to do things differently than we have before, to create a healthy economy that benefits all.

***To achieve what ends?***

Sustainable, diversified industries and job creation on reservations, in the small agriculturally based towns, on the farms and in Great Falls.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Residents of Northcentral Montana including those who are now unemployed or underemployed.

**Strategy 3: By 2013, Northcentral Montana is a regional community, with extended networks of social and business relationships, where communities trust and rely on one another.**

**What will be done?**

1. Develop a “Council for the Common Good” drawing from all 11 counties and the 3 reservations, and including people from all walks of life. Councils for the Common Good are groups of people who get together to think of innovations that can be introduced to benefit all citizens, organizations, and businesses in a community.
2. Create mechanisms and approaches that will enable and encourage communities in Northcentral Montana to develop business plans and economic strategies in collaboration, rather than in competition, with each other.
3. Develop cultural and historical tourism across the region.
  - Tie the three reservations together, and all points in between.
  - Potential partner is the Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance.
  - Develop an intra-regional tourism program. For example, market the goods, services and cultural events available on the reservations to people within the region. Specific ideas for doing so include:
    - Network with area communities on social events, i.e. Pow Wows, Round Dances, using personal invitations, advertisements, radio, websites, etc
    - Invite area businesses and government offices to make informational and how-to presentations to associations, clubs, businesses, on reservations etc.
    - Obtain booths at area events, for example Havre Festival Days, 4th of July and solicit invitations from area associations, clubs and businesses to provide demonstrations and products available (for example, moccasins from Rocky Boy).
    - Develop Trading Post at Rocky Boy accessible to area folks.
  - Lewis and Clark Bicentennial
4. Develop ‘branded’ identity for Northcentral Montana.

**To meet what needs?**

Prosperity for all residents will come through a recognition of the self-worth, skills, and talents of each individual, while providing opportunities for everyone to use those skills and talents. The building of mutual awareness, trust and respect, both within communities and between communities,

will foster cooperative business models and reliance on each other, rather than outside resources. Through cooperative planning and development, communities will also be aware of the needs and values of others and will be enabled to 'do no harm'.

**To achieve what ends?** Sustainable, diversified industries and job creation on reservations, in the small agriculturally based towns, on the farms and in Great Falls.

**For the benefit of whom?** Residents of Northcentral Montana including those who are now unemployed or underemployed

**Strategy 4: By 2013, everyone in Northcentral Montana will have a telephone, computer, and Internet access and fully understand how to use these tools.**

- What will be done?**
1. Financial and credit assistance to help those who have trouble getting phone service.
    - Also provide subsidized voice mail services to the unemployed/underemployed who do not/can not have a regular phone number.
  2. Develop an on-line regional web portal. Market the portal and teach people how to use it. (e.g. where is there free Internet access in their community, how to use the Web, how it can help them in their daily lives.) The portal should:
    - Provide user friendly access to resources for those trying to get out of poverty (jobs, training, mentoring, discussion groups as described in other strategic directions)
    - Support regional economic development
    - Support of cultural tourism
  3. Provide assessment and education for businesses and organizations about how to use the Internet for marketing.

**To meet what needs?** The residents of Northcentral Montana lag behind other parts of the nation in the use technology, which is a barrier to economic progress, both for individuals and for communities. The lack of telephone service hinders people seeking work, needing to communicate with an employer, or needing to make health care or child-care arrangements. It serves as one of the traps that keep people in poverty.

The lack of consistent cellular and Internet access, and the lack of skills and familiarity needed to use those technologies is also a barrier to developing small businesses, bringing larger corporations to the area, and marketing products made in Northcentral Montana world wide.

***To achieve what ends?***

For the region to thrive, residents must be able to contact each other and the outside world.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Access to basic telephone service will benefit low-income persons living in Northcentral Montana.

Access to cellular and internet service, and the skills to use them effectively will benefit schools and businesses, supporting both education and business development. This will in turn provide increased opportunities for job creation and the filling of those jobs with qualified individuals.

***Strategy 5: By 2013, Northcentral Montana will be a place that attracts and nourishes entrepreneurs.***

***What will be done?***

1. Provide access to the capital and support needed to create businesses, to people who have found it difficult to obtain.
  - Access to local banks/credit unions in particular on the reservations
  - Lending clubs
  - Micro-loan program
  - Access to equity in homes on reservations, on lease hold lands
  - Business technical assistance programs
  - Create Individual Development Account program to help low-income people develop assets to support higher education, home ownership, and business start-up
2. Provide technical assistance to small businesses in marketing and connections to global markets.
  - See Strategy 4, Action 3 as a first step
  - Provide support in effective web site development
  - Provide technical assistance in how to sell over the internet

3. Develop mechanisms to assure that funds are available for community economic development projects including grants and equity loans.
4. Identify and eliminate the impediments for entrepreneurs in the region.
  - Are there cultural values that hinder
  - Encourage community and cultural acceptance
  - Study and advocate for reform of taxation and regulation that impedes entrepreneurs and business development
  - Identify areas where adequate support is lacking
5. Evaluate and build on the existing support systems for youth and adult entrepreneurs
  - Teach kids self-sufficiency and self-employment
  - Integrate entrepreneurship into the school and college curriculums
6. Provide education and assistance in preventing credit problems, credit rehabilitation and ways to build or rebuild credit.
  - Training in basic financial skills such as check writing, banking and budgeting
  - Credit counseling

***To meet what needs?***

Foster the skills and commitment needed by entrepreneurs. Support of entrepreneurs, in particular low-income persons wanting to start new businesses, will bring a mind-set of excitement and vision to the region, rather than a 'hand-out' mind-set.

***To achieve what ends?***

While the philosophy of supporting entrepreneurship can be applied to the region as a whole, these particular actions are targeted to people living in poverty, both on and off reservations.

The most direct result of these actions will be the development of individual assets, one of the surest ways out of poverty, and the development of 'jobs' through self-employment and small businesses that will provide needed income for people living in poverty.

In the long term, entrepreneurship and small business ownership makes people proud of their communities and the contributions they make to them. In addition, more of the money spent locally will stay in the local economy rather than going out-of-state (e.g. shopping at a locally owned store rather than at Wal-Mart).

A focus on entrepreneurship will also create a regional economy that is more flexible and responsive to the changing world than one built on large corporate enterprise, which have a proven history of 'disappearing' as the global market changes.

**For the benefit of whom?**

Low-income individuals living in Northcentral Montana with an interest in working their way out of poverty.

The plan for funding these strategies is described in detail in the following Chapter 6 and in Appendix F, but the following actions related to the Economy were identified as being of highest priority for implementing with the help of NWAF funds:

**Priority Actions**

<i>Action</i>	<i>NWAF Funds Requested</i>	<i>Total Ten Year Budget</i>
<i>1.1. Develop and build on existing academic programs to train people in the skills/trades needed by private businesses and public agencies</i>	\$436,000	\$1,320,000
<i>1.2. Develop training programs for soft skills.</i>	\$255,000	\$410,000
<i>3.3 Develop a “Council for the Common Good” drawing from all 11 counties and the 3 reservations, and including people from all walks of life. Councils for the Common Good are groups of people who get together to think of innovations that can be introduced to benefit all citizens, organizations, and businesses in a community.</i>	\$46,000	\$88,500
<i>4.1 Financial and credit assistance to help those who have trouble getting phone service</i>	\$28,250	\$230,200
<i>4.2 Develop an on-line regional web portal. Market the portal and teach people how to use it.</i>	\$33,500	\$134,650
<i>5.1 Provide access to the capital and support needed to create businesses, to people who have found it difficult to obtain: access to bank or credit union services on Ft. Belknap and Rocky Boy’s Reservations</i>	\$100,000	\$2,200,000

<i>Action</i>	<i>NWAF Funds Requested</i>	<i>Total Ten Year Budget</i>
<i>5.1 Provide access to the capital and support needed to create businesses, to people who have found it difficult to obtain: micro-loan program, IDA program, access home equity programs on reservations</i>	\$1,500,000	\$4,193,600
<i>5.2 Provide technical assistance to small businesses in marketing and connections to global markets.</i>	\$95,000	\$983,400

**Strategic Direction - Education: To create educational opportunities and resources that are readily available and affordable to people at all educational levels.**

Education, in all forms and settings, is found in the Strategies and Actions for all seven Strategic Directions. It is a strategic direction in of itself because of the need to strengthen the schools, colleges, and vocational programs in Northcentral Montana and to increase the success of students of all ages engaged in those programs. Education provides job and life skills that are the basis for moving out of poverty. The Strategies and Actions were developed based on an understanding that:

- Education occurs from cradle to grave. Early childhood activities prepare youngsters for school years and lifelong learning is essential to update job skills. The goals are structured to cover the entire life spectrum in which learning occurs.
- Learning takes place in and outside of the classrooms through a variety of settings. Often, those in poverty are intimidated by a classroom setting and need alternative learning environments.

The Strategies fit into a basic framework of:

- Enhancing curriculum to provide new opportunities and enrich the learning experience,
- Integrating culture into the classroom to make learning more relevant and to promote understanding within the region,
- Providing adequate budget, personnel, and other resources so schools can teach effectively, and
- Improving performance of the learner so they can succeed in other areas of life.

Within this framework six strategies were set for 2013:

***Strategy 1: Have 100% of students ready to start school and supported in continued learning efforts.***

***What will be done?***

1. Support and expand Early Head Start, Home Start, and Head Start programs throughout the region using models such as home-based education programs where children learn with and from parents, and readiness to learn models.
2. Develop a child advocate to work with children, schools and courts on behalf of the child and strengthen child protection laws.
3. Provide educational structure or elements for private day-care providers. (see also Child, Youth and Families Strategy 3, Action 1)
4. Provide basic school supplies for low-income children.

***To meet what needs?***

Children living in poverty are likely to start first grade without the academic or social skills needed to succeed. They are behind before they even begin. Their parents need help in learning how to support their child's development and learning from a very early age, in order to break the cycle of generational poverty that limits their ability to take advantage of education.

Once in school outside factors such as nutrition, domestic crisis, and social pressures have a dramatic influence on a student's ability to learn. Readiness to learn programs, mentoring, as well as school based food programs, and after-school supports, which help both families and children, have been demonstrated to improve to the ability of low-income students to succeed in school.

***To achieve what ends?***

Improve the ability of low-income children and youth to succeed socially and academically in school.

***For the benefit of whom?***

All families living in poverty in Northcentral Montana.

***Strategy 2: Make it possible for more students to complete high school or obtain their GED.***

***What will be done?***

1. Increase the number of books in the library and label each book with appropriate reading levels including Accelerated Reader software for libraries. Identify student reading level and match to appropriate reading material (STAR Reading Test). Use STAR math test and accelerated math programs
2. Promote after school homework/project assistance programs throughout the region by providing the human resources and staffing to schools to assist with reading programs and goal setting for students. Use programs where students mentor other students at multi-age levels.
3. Expand access to GED training in non-academic settings and in small towns using non-traditional classes such as kitchen-table programs and GED mentors.
4. Explore alternative curriculum that is culturally based and provides cultural relevancy to curriculum for non-dominant cultures. Promote cross-cultural experiences to all students.
5. Allow same level of funding for districts that want to use the grade school model through the 8th grade as the funding for middle-school students.

6. Early identification of at-risk students and apply adequate support for learning.

***To meet what needs?***

From 1990 to 2000, Montana's rate of high school students dropping out of school worsened by 14 percent. In the rest of the nation, the high school dropout rate improved by 10 percent. On the reservations of Northcentral Montana, between 20-25% of people over 18 do not have a high-school degree, and in many counties the rate is between 15-20% (see Appendix C).

Students need either a high school diploma or a GED to obtain a job that pays a 'living-wage' or to go on for post-high school education. For many, this is the first step in moving out of poverty. Focusing on a high school diploma through education or the GED process is also a tangible goal that emphasizes the importance of education and helps students set goals that give them a sense of achievement for continued success.

***To achieve what ends?***

Increase the graduation rate for low-income students, with a particular focus on the reservations.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Low-income youth.

***Strategy 3: Develop flexible opportunities that engage learners and inspire them to expand their learning horizons.***

***What will be done?***

1. Develop experiential or hands-on learning approaches that target specific instructions/curriculums that can be used in schools throughout the region. Build the program around industry and pre-apprenticeship programs.
2. Create more opportunities for summer camps to bring academics in a fun setting and include scholarships to low-income campers.
3. Promote non-academic enrichment activities for students in K – 12.
4. Support cross-generational educational opportunities (foster grandparents, elder hostels, involve parents in offering enrichment classes).

5. Develop a multi-year asset building community development program modeled after the “Helping Kids Succeed- Alaska Style” program and the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement. (See also Community Strategy 1 and Children, Youth and Families Strategy 2)

***To meet what needs?***

Learning occurs in many different venues, not just schools, and increased opportunities are needed in the arts, on-the-job, through community service and as support to individual efforts. Learning needs to be encouraged, as a lifelong endeavor that helps individuals succeed, respond to change, and realize their full potential. Developing an intellectual curiosity, in and out of the classroom offers people a different view of life. Offering children and adults in poverty a wide range of learning alternatives will suggest new opportunities and expose them to resources and role models that will help them achieve their personal goals.

***For the benefit of whom?***

The focus of this strategy is people living in poverty, but residents of Northcentral Montana will ultimately benefit.

***Strategy 4: Have current technology be part of the learning process in 100% of classrooms and learning settings throughout the learning experience.***

***What will be done?***

1. Research and promote best practices for using technology in classrooms and conduct teacher training to incorporate these techniques in an appropriate manner. (In support of Strategy 2 Action 6)
2. Use distance learning technology system in schools to offer continuing education.
3. Locate funding sources to help schools to continually upgrade to current technology.
4. Provide a laptop to every 8<sup>th</sup> grader in districts with predominantly low-income enrollments, students enrolled at the tribal colleges, and for GED

***To meet what needs?***

Technology is critical to giving students access to educational resources and help students get the skills they need to enter the workforce. Schools must be properly equipped, and the use of technology must be an integral part of the learning process. Teachers must also have the skills to incorporate technology into the everyday curriculum. Most children living in poverty do not have access to computers and on-line resources, so it is essential they build these skills while in school.

**To achieve what ends?** Develop job-ready youth and young adults who are able to participate fully in the work force and/or higher education.

**For the benefit of whom?** All children and youth in Northcentral Montana, but children living in poverty in particular.

**Strategy 5: Ensure that meaningful life-long learning is available to learners of all ages.**

**What will be done?**

1. Develop training for entrepreneurs that promote a cultural tourism corridor.
2. Use alternative sources such as libraries and tribal colleges to advise adults on post-secondary education and to respond to Significant Emotional Events (SEE) that gets adults back into the learning setting (loss of job, divorce, children leave home, relocation etc.) Use non-traditional methods such as train the trainer and educational opportunities in non-academic settings.
3. Coordinate between post-secondary institutions, particularly tribal colleges, in the region to enable students to transfer credits when entering the Montana University system.
4. Develop a regional job corps focusing on growth industries and providing a supportive community of learning, which includes single parents.
5. Use learning brokers to bring educational programs to rural areas.
6. Promote region-wide literacy through region-wide booklists and literacy programs.

**To meet what needs?**

Today's economy frequently requires workers to acquire new skills, and few unskilled jobs pay sufficiently to support a family. Learning beyond high school graduation must be a lifelong process, and increased opportunities must be offered to adults in Northcentral Montana. These should include vocational education, certifications, employee training, business education, professional development, math and science, and a wide range of continuing education. Post-secondary institutions must work together to coordinate and build curricula, and non-traditional learning settings should be developed.

**To achieve what ends?** Assure that adults have the means and opportunities to learn new skills as the job market demands, and are able to maintain gainful and meaningful employment throughout their working life.

**For the benefit of whom?** People living in poverty who are able to learn new skills, and people who are able to stay out of poverty by undertaking new jobs.

**Strategy 6: Develop public-private partnerships to enhance educational opportunities.**

**What will be done?**

1. Offer grant writing training and resources to facilitate educational organizations' ability to leverage outside funding resources.
2. Conduct an inventory of existing programs in the region and use national research to promote best practices and improve schools in the region. Provide a resource center for the region to provide schools with access to learning fairs, speaker's bureau, enrichment activities, role models, and forums (i.e. National Forum Issues Institute).
3. Outreach and network to cultivate funders for potential projects.
4. Organize regular roundtable meetings/forums among agencies in the region to promote collaboration and explore arrangements, such as, establishing co-ops among school districts to share resources.

**To meet what needs?** Some form of education is a thread that weaves through all seven strategic directions. As both state and local governments experience budget hardships, public-private partnerships will need to be developed to achieve the educational goals, and coordination and collaboration will be needed to assure that gaps are filled and duplication of effort is avoided.

In this era of tight budgets and school closures, teachers have difficulty in maintaining their skill base and knowledge of best educational practices. Increased collaboration and sharing of resources and knowledge is needed.

**To achieve what ends?** Maximize the use educational resources and offer opportunities that meet best practices.

**For the benefit of whom?** Schools serving all children and youth, and thereby also low-income youth.

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The plan for funding these strategies is described in detail in the following Chapter 6 and in Appendix F, but the following actions related to Education were identified as being of highest priority for implementing with the help of NWAFF funds:

**Priority Actions**

<i>Action</i>	<i>NWAFF Funds Requested</i>	<i>Total Ten Year Budget</i>
<i>1.1 Support and expand Early Head Start, Home Start, and Head Start programs throughout the region using models such as home-based education programs where children learn with and from parents, and readiness to learn models.</i>	\$417,250	\$1,000,000
<i>2.1 Increase the number of books in the library and label each book with appropriate reading levels including Accelerated Reader software for libraries. Identify student reading level and match to appropriate reading material (STAR Reading Test). Use STAR math test and accelerated math programs</i>	\$50,000	\$200,000
<i>2.3 Expand access to GED training in non-academic settings and in small towns using non-traditional classes such as kitchen-table programs and GED mentors.</i>	\$189,000	\$385,000
<i>4.2 Research and promote best practices for using technology in classrooms and conduct teacher training to incorporate these techniques in an appropriate manner.</i>	\$116,900	\$1,106,500
<i>6.4 Organize regular roundtable meetings/forums among agencies in the region to promote collaboration and explore arrangements, such as, establishing co-ops among school districts to share resources.</i>	\$15,000	\$66,500

**Strategic Direction - Housing: To ensure that safe and affordable housing and home ownership is available.**

Housing plays an important, but complex, role in helping people and communities move out of poverty. It provides shelter and safety for families, and home ownership itself provides a means to build equity and assets, which can be used to secure financing for further education or a new business. In Northcentral Montana, we have particular challenges:

- Many of the small farming and railroad towns have houses standing empty and deteriorating, or on the market for years as people leave the area. Housing prices and equity are depressed in these towns, and some housing stock is no longer safe (even if being used).
- The reservations have a severe shortage of housing. Economic conditions, the growth in population, and the lack of needed infrastructure (in particular water<sup>9</sup>) to support housing, have created lists of hundreds of families waiting for publicly funded housing. Homelessness on the reservations is hidden, as multiple families live in a home designed for a single family.
- In many areas, public housing was built quickly, but poorly, to meet the need. Lack of maintenance, inadequate infrastructure, and the wear and tear of severe overcrowding have made many of the homes, particularly on reservations, unsound and unsafe.
- Indians who either own their home, or wish to, on the reservations usually find it extremely difficult to find financing or to have the equity in their home accepted as such.

The region also has a tremendous asset in tackling these issues, with the presence of the Neighborhood Housing Services program, which is based in Great Falls, but serves other areas of the state. It has a long track record of obtaining housing funds, rehabilitation of deteriorated housing, and development of community based housing programs.

Four strategies for 2013 were set to improve housing and home ownership:

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<sup>9</sup> The Blackfeet are building a \$13 million water pipeline to bring quality drinking water to the reservation. This will permit housing to be expanded, and a dialysis center and nursing home to be added.

**Strategy 1: Create new, safe, decent, sanitary, and affordable single-family homes and multi-family housing for low-income and special needs populations where there is a lack of available housing.**

***What will be done?***

1. Implement construction curriculum for youth and adults in high school, tribal colleges, and MSU-N/COT to provide trained craft people, to reduce construction costs and to expand self-help programs. (See also Economy Strategy 1 Action 1)
2. Develop an information clearinghouse and/or on-line database to coordinate among agencies to educate partners about various programs and to streamline the construction loan process.
3. Conduct a housing market analysis to determine 1) where there is the most severe need for new affordable housing units 2) what types of units are needed to meet this need, 3) projection of future needs 3) resources to meet the needs, 4) agencies that can help address the issues and gaps in services, 5) to identify infill home sites and infrastructure needs for new housing development that would incorporate mixed income housing units and scattered site concepts, and 6) water issues.
4. Create a regional coordinator system that can provide staffing for housing inspections, and funding and planning rehabilitation and new construction programs in small rural areas.
5. Explore alternative home construction techniques for affordable housing as a potential industry for the area and coordinate with existing efforts.

***To meet what needs?***

Housing needs on the three reservations are severe, despite ongoing housing development. Existing housing is often deteriorated and no longer safe, and families are crowded together in houses designed for single families. Throughout the region, people with special housing needs, such as the elderly and the disabled, find it difficult to find safe and accessible homes in their communities. They are often forced to leave their homes and move to Great Falls to find adequate housing. This places them in more expensive settings and distances them from their families and community.

***To achieve what ends?***

Increase housing stock for low-income families while at the same time expanding the trade skills of young adults and using existing resources more effectively.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Low income families, in particular in areas with housing shortages, such as the reservations and rural areas.

**Strategy 2: Rehabilitate existing single and multi-family homes to meet the needs of low-income families.**

***What will be done?***

1. Increase rural rehabilitation capacity through inspections, contractor development, rehabilitation programs and volunteer recruitment.
2. Provide a pool of rehabilitation funding in forms such as reverse mortgage, maintenance fund, low interest loans, tool bank, and other programs.
3. Conduct analysis in cities and small towns to target neighborhoods for rehabilitation and identification of other effective programs.
4. Offer tenant/landlord education and assistance for low-income renters on fair housing/meth (drug) issues.

***To meet what needs?***

Low-income families often cannot afford routine maintenance of their homes, or live in rentals where the landlord is absent or not interested in maintaining the housing due to economic conditions. Low-income seniors need modifications made to their homes to allow them to remain in them.

***To achieve what ends?***

Rehabilitation can address these issues, as well as preserve neighborhoods and make them desirable places to live. If housing stock is in disrepair or surrounded by other deteriorating homes, this results in both undesirable living conditions, as well as a poor investment for potential home buyers. Preserving and maintaining homes is critical to provide safe housing, instilling pride in place and community, and using existing resources well.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Low-income families and their neighborhoods.

**Strategy 3: Increase and retain home-ownership of low-income households in the community of their choice.**

***What will be done?***

1. Provide a variety of down payment and first mortgage assistance programs and find ways to link the programs and pool with rehabilitation funds.
2. Provide outreach to social service agencies, housing professionals, lenders, realtors and program administrators on pre-sale and post-purchase programs on and off the reservation.
3. Provide post-purchase counseling on foreclosure, predatory lending and home maintenance.
4. Provide pre-purchase education on homeownership, financial education, credit counseling and other topics, and a housing advocate to help navigate the process.
5. Financial assistance for people in homes facing crisis such as major medical costs.

***To meet what needs?***

In Northcentral Montana, a barrier to home-ownership is not just a lack of income, but also difficulty in obtaining mortgages from banks for homes in low-income neighborhoods. This is particularly a concern on reservations where bankers are not familiar with trust land issues. Education about the alternatives and opportunities for providing mortgages on trust land is needed. In addition, first time homeowners coming out of a poverty environment, often lack the skills to avoid predatory lenders and to stay in and maintain their homes. They need new skills to budget, manage mortgage payments, and maintain their homes, and must be supported not only in making the initial investment, but also in sustaining it.

***To achieve what ends?***

Increasing home-ownership helps people move out of poverty by allowing them to build equity and assets, and gives them a vested interest in the community where they live.

***For the benefit of whom?***

Persons living in poverty in Northcentral Montana

**Strategy 4: Integrate services for the homeless population, including services to multiple families that live in a single-family dwelling.**

***What will be done?***

1. Develop an emergency shelter and referral system for towns throughout the region.
2. Link homeless services to a continuum of care to address substance abuse, mental health treatment and other self-sufficiency issues.
3. Investigate ways to provide family and social services to the homeless population represented by multiple families living in one house.
4. Provide support to assist homeless individuals and families to move towards a permanent housing solution.

***To meet what needs?***

Provide a range of services to address the variety of causes that contribute to homelessness. These services are more available in Great Falls than in the small towns in the region, where homelessness is less obvious, but nevertheless present. As budgets and services are cut for vulnerable populations, such as the mentally ill, homelessness is expected to rise. In addition, where families crowd together in single-family homes, stress and social problems usually increase, and families need more community support.

***To achieve what ends?***

Reduce homelessness.

***For the benefit of whom?***

People living 'on the street', in shelters or doubled up with other families.

The plan for funding these strategies is described in detail in the following Chapter 6 and in Appendix F, but the following actions related to Housing were identified as being of highest priority for implementing with the help of NWAFF funds:

**Priority Actions**

<i>Action</i>	<i>NWAF Funds Requested</i>	<i>Total Ten Year Budget</i>
<i>1.2 Develop an information clearinghouse and/or on-line database to coordinate among agencies to educate partners about various programs and to streamline the construction loan process.</i>	\$5,000	\$77,400
<i>1.3 Conduct a housing market analysis to determine 1) where there is the most severe need for new affordable housing units 2) what types of units are needed to meet this need, 3) projection of future needs 3) resources to meet the needs, 4) agencies that can help address the issues and gaps in services, 5) to identify infill home sites and infrastructure needs for new housing development that would incorporate mixed income housing units and scattered site concepts, and 6) water issues.</i>	\$10,000	\$35,000
<i>1.4 Create a regional coordinator system that can provide staffing for housing inspections, and funding and planning rehabilitation and new construction programs in small rural areas, and 2.1 Increase rural rehabilitation capacity through inspections, contractor development, rehabilitation programs and volunteer recruitment.</i>	\$40,000	\$994,500
<i>2.2 Provide a pool of rehabilitation funding in forms such as reverse mortgage, maintenance fund, low interest loans, tool bank, and other programs.</i>	\$5000	\$2,903,000
<i>3.1 Provide a variety of down payment and first mortgage assistance programs and find ways to link the programs and pool with rehabilitation funds.</i>	\$182,200	\$12,332,000
<i>3.2 Provide outreach to social service agencies, housing professionals, lenders, realtors and program administrators on pre-sale and post-purchase programs on and off the reservation</i>	\$90,000	\$422,000
<i>3.3 Provide post-purchase counseling on foreclosure, predatory lending and home maintenance.</i>	\$27,000	\$139,500
<i>3.4 Provide pre-purchase education on homeownership, financial education, credit counseling and other topics, and housing advocate to help navigate process.</i>		

**Strategic Direction - Transportation: To ensure access to affordable, accessible, and convenient transportation for low-income individuals.**

Northcentral Montana lacks any public transportation system, except in Great Falls. The last local bus system serving a small town closed down four or five years ago. It is no longer possible to take a bus between even the larger towns (e.g. between Havre and Great Falls). Without a car, people are forced to rely on friends and family to get to work, to childcare, to the doctor, and even to the grocery store, which often are miles away from home. The lack of transportation and the difficulty of owning and maintaining a reliable car were often described as one of life's major challenges by people living in poverty. This is true for people living in towns but even more so for people living on reservations or on farms, who may be 20-30 miles from the nearest services or job opportunities.

Two strategies were set for 2013 to improve transportation in Northcentral Montana:

***Strategy 1: There will be a regional transportation network and information source for transportation related needs.***

***What will be done?***

1. Develop a Transportation network as an ongoing effort to provide transportation assistance to low-income individuals in the region. The network would include:
  - Members of each TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) for each county with a TAC
  - Non-profit entities already providing transportation assistance (e.g., senior centers, councils on aging, agencies serving those with developmental disabilities, churches) via vans and dedicated buses
  - Government entities providing transportation assistance (e.g. Blackfeet Tribe Transit Program, Great Falls Transit, etc.)
  - Private entities (e.g., Havre taxi, businesses)
  - Other entities providing assistance for transportation (Montana Dept. of Transportation, Public Assistance programs)
  - Low Income Individuals
  - Medical facilities

2. Disseminate information about available transportation services and programs so that it can best reach those most in need of transportation assistance.
  - Develop a number of dissemination methods including web-based, newspaper, and radio.
  - Recognize that web-based approaches are not likely to be accessible to those most in need, but will be a source of information to entities providing assistance to low income persons.
  
3. Test and evaluate dissemination methods for effectiveness and be sure to evaluate effectiveness of various methods on Indian reservations.
  - Identify specific transportation needs of low-income persons; assess how needs are currently being met, or could be met; and evaluate services for effectiveness.
  - Conduct a needs assessment of low-income persons for transportation needs—what are their needs and how are they willing to address their needs.
  - Research best practices and conduct feasibility studies for how specific projects could work in this region.
  - Recognize that what may work well in other parts of the country may have to be adapted to meet specific conditions and cultural acceptability here.
  - Develop pilot and other projects based on the steps above and evaluate projects for effectiveness in meeting identified needs.

***To meet what needs?***

There is little or no coordination of the few agencies that provide support or transportation for persons living in poverty. Resources do exist, but most are not widely known. Improved sharing of information and coordination between agencies help address the difficulty in obtaining transportation.

***To achieve what ends?***

Better use of existing transportation resources by low income persons

***For the benefit of whom?***

People living in poverty, though the transportation network will be available to all.

**Strategy 2: Low-income persons will have a variety of options to get from Point A to Point B.**

**What will be done?**

1. Provide education and information about various transportation options so that people have information to make choices that match their needs and resources.
  - Provide comparisons of costs/benefits of various transportation options (e.g., provide information on costs of owning a car—purchase costs AND costs of maintenance, operation, insurance, etc.—compared to using buses, taxis, other public transportation where these are available)
2. Create ways for low-income individuals to obtain, maintain, and operate personal vehicles. The intent would be for a “hand-up” out of poverty, rather than a “hand-out.” Ideas that could be explored include:
  - Alternative loan programs (e.g., revolving loan programs)—program tried in area and experience raises questions and suggests opportunities
  - Assistance with maintenance, insurance, etc.
  - Emergency assistance for fuel
  - “Good News Garage” program model (for car loans, maintenance, etc.)
  - Incentive savings program to purchase vehicles (an incentive match for saving for outright purchase of an older, reliable vehicle)
  - Combination of car maintenance education programs (training mechanics) and providing low cost maintenance for vehicles
  - Assistance would be focused on low-income, and should be developed in a way that provides varying degrees of assistance based on various needs
3. Build on and expand public transportation and other transportation methods that are viable alternatives to individual personal vehicles.
  - Experience at previous and current efforts have raised questions related to sustainability, and indicate substantial “under-use.” Why have the programs failed? What have we learned? What would cause people to consistently use alternative transportation options?
  - Options to explore include:
    - Carpooling and ride-sharing
    - Mini-van ride sharing (MR TMA – Missoula mini-van ride share model program)
    - Other best practices

4. Help ensure non-emergency medical transportation.
  - Ensure that transportation to and from medical facilities for non-emergency medical care is available and timely.
  - Provide assistance for family member transportation to visit individuals in out-of-region emergency or critical care.

<b><i>To meet what needs?</i></b>	Transportation in sparsely populated areas is hard to provide cost-effectively and it is likely that multiple options are needed, including access to personal vehicles. How best to provide options must be explored in greater depth and best practices in other areas identified that could be adapted to Northcentral Montana. Preliminary ideas have been identified, but need to be tested.
<b><i>To achieve what ends?</i></b>	To remove lack of transportation as a barrier to working, going to school, or getting healthy. Enable low-income individuals to travel to work, take children to childcare, go to medical appointments, go to school etc.
<b><i>For the benefit of whom?</i></b>	People living in poverty in Northcentral Montana

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The plan for funding these strategies is described in detail in the following Chapter 6 and in Appendix F, but the following actions related to Transportation were identified as being of highest priority for implementing with the help of NWAFF funds:

<b><i>Priority Actions</i></b>		
<i>Action</i>	<i>NWAF Funds Requested</i>	<i>Total Ten Year Budget</i>
<i>1.1. Develop a Transportation network as an ongoing effort to provide transportation assistance to low-income individuals in the region</i>	\$31,000	\$118,000

## Themes that Bind the Region and Communities

Stepping back from the strategies and actions, described within each strategic direction permits one to see that many relate to each other across the disciplines and issues represented by Health, Culture, Economy, Families, Education, Transportation and Housing. The seven strategy teams, working from the foundation set at the Search Conference, approached their work with what turned out to be related premises. Seven themes bind the strategic directions together.

1. Building social capital – bringing people in closer relationship to each other through the development of networks to share information and resources. Through these goals and strategies, relationships across disciplines and between communities are enhanced, and the social structure is changed to permit better planning and implementation of community change.
2. Removing barriers to moving out of poverty – tackling people’s tangible obstacles to improving their financial status such as lack of housing, lack of a GED, difficulty in securing childcare, transportation, or even a telephone.
3. Building healthy communities – in which the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health of residents is strengthened, and residents are able to come together as families, or as neighbors, to provide support and solve problems.
4. Using the land, while protecting it –building personal connections across the region through the shared love for the land, while using this valuable resource to create jobs and sustain the local economy.
5. Increasing assets and available capital – and thereby addressing multiple issues whether it is adequate housing, ability to grow a business and create jobs, or developing individual financial security.
6. Assuring access and use of technology to further both individual and community growth – whether it be having a residential phone, marketing new products globally over the internet, or attending classes that are 100 miles away.
7. Learning as a tool and an end – weaves its way through all goals as a way to break down barriers, create opportunities, build understanding, and use resources wisely.

The following table shows how the strategies of each strategic direction also fit within these themes. Often, a goal fits within more than one theme, and at times a specific strategy is noted to show why a goal is included.

The power of the strategies and actions lies in the fact that they are not one-dimensional or linear, but that they will be implemented in concert, supporting and building on each other, enabling the voices of Northcentral Montana to be heard both singly and together with energy and joy.

### Themes That Cut Across the Strategic Directions

	<b>Build Social Capital/ Create Networks and Share Information and Resources</b>	<b>Remove Barriers &amp; Change the “Floor” from which people move up</b>	<b>Build Healthy Communities</b>
<b>Children, Youth &amp; Families</b>	Families’ basic needs are met. - Network of social services	Provide more families with affordable, accessible, quality child care programs.	More people will be successful in raising, nurturing, and cherishing their multi-generational families and increase their voices in their communities.  Increase successful outcomes for youth.
<b>Community &amp; Culture</b>	Increase understanding and acceptance of diversity, seek to minimize cultural oppression among people and within community		Promote community healing by providing cultural outlets to deal with grief and denial and to encourage creativity within communities.  Increase understanding and acceptance of diversity, seek to minimize cultural oppression among people and within community
<b>Education</b>	Develop public-private partnerships to enhance educational opportunities.	Obtain increased opportunities for successful completion of a high school diploma or GED.  Have 100% of students ready to start school and supported in continued learning efforts. - Expand Head Start, Early Head Start - Child advocates	
<b>Economy</b>	By 2013, Northcentral Montana is a regional community, with extended networks of social and business relationships, where communities trust and rely on one another.	By 2013, Northcentral Montana will have found new, innovative, and environmentally sustainable ways of using its human, natural, and renewable resources to create wealth for its residents. - Increased job and entrepreneurial opportunities  By 2013, everyone in Northcentral Montana will have a telephone, computer and Internet access and fully understand how to use these tools. - Financial and credit assistance	

Note: Examples of actions are shown, when needed, to clarify how a strategy relates to a theme.

	Use and Protect the Land	Increase Assets / Capital Available	Assure Access and Use of Technology	Learning
Children, Youth & Families				Provide more families with affordable, accessible, quality child care programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advance professionalism</li> <li>- Educate community, employers, parents</li> </ul>
Community & Culture	Promote an understanding and connection with the land.			Increase understanding and acceptance of diversity and seek to minimize cultural oppression among people and within communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multi-faceted education program</li> <li>- Youth leadership development</li> </ul>
Education			Have current technology be part of the learning process in 100% of classrooms and learning settings throughout the learning experience.	Develop flexible opportunities that engage learners and inspire them to expand their learning horizons. <p>Have 100% of students ready to start school and supported in continued learning efforts.</p> <p>Ensure that meaningful life long learning is available to learners of all ages.</p>
Economy	By 2013, Northcentral Montana will have found new, innovative, and environmentally sustainable ways of using its human, natural, and renewable resources to create wealth for its residents.	By 2013, Northcentral Montana will be a place that attracts and nourishes entrepreneurs.	By 2013, everyone in Northcentral Montana will have a telephone, computer, and Internet access and fully understand how to use these tools. <p>By 2013, Northcentral Montana will be a place that attracts and nourishes entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical assistance for global marketing</li> </ul>	By 2013, everyone will possess the skills needed to get and keep a job. <p>By 2013, Northcentral Montana will be a place that attracts and nourishes entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship into school curricula</li> <li>- Financial and credit counseling &amp; rehab</li> </ul>

Note: Examples of actions are shown, when needed, to clarify how a strategy relates to a theme.