

IMPACT



University of Idaho
Cooperative
Extension System

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Impact of Older Immigrants on Rural Idaho "Retiree Magnet" Communities

The Situation

Older persons are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. A growing proportion of these persons have the economic resources, education, and health that facilitate their migrating to a state and community of their choice. Increasingly this migration is to western states, with rural areas in Idaho experiencing expansion. A number of counties have been identified as places where persons over 65 years of age move. Boundary, Valley, Boise, Custer, and Blaine are "retiree magnet" counties in that they attract a higher proportion of older persons than other Idaho rural counties. Persons who are natives to these areas (have lived there longer than 10 years), businesspersons, service providers, and community planners are considering the impact of an influx of older persons on their community.

Our Response

To help communities determine how to meet the needs and decide what the consequences are of older immigrants; an USDA Research Initiatives grant was funded. Over a two-year period the work funded by this grant will determine the economic and social impact of older immigrants. Communities can then use this information to make informed decisions and develop strategies to attract or deal with this influx.

Three groups of stakeholders will be involved in separate focus groups from three areas that include the five rural Idaho counties of Blaine, Boise,

Boundary, Custer, and Valley; the focus groups will be held between May and July of 2000. Focus group participants will include older immigrants, persons who have lived in the community 10 or more years, and community leaders and businesspersons. Questions participants will be asked include community satisfaction, how "sense of place" is developed in the community--particularly for new residents, what affects quality of life in their community, and how growth impacts the quality of life, and to what extent older persons patronize local businesses and services. Long-term residents will be asked how older immigrants are affecting their community. Immigrants will ask about housing prices, cost of living, quality of life, open space, and services. Businesspersons will be asked if immigrants are a positive or negative factor for their business.

Achievements

Contact persons in the counties where the focus groups will be conducted have been identified.

Questions to ask each of the three focus groups are currently being developed. In Fall 2000 a follow-up telephone survey will be conducted with the businesspersons and community officials. A web site will be developed with the findings. Slide sets will be available for communities and presentations.



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