

IMPACT



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Extension Helps Community Library Group Save Funds and Answer Questions

The Situation

Library services available in Valley County have been limited to the cities of McCall and Cascade for many years. County residents may use the libraries but they pay a small fee to do so. City residents support the library through city taxes, which is not a small fee for some. As the population of the county grows, so does the need for appropriate and adequate library services that meet the needs of the entire county. A small group of library employees and interested volunteers from throughout the county started meeting as a group with a representative from the Idaho State Library to explore ways to expand service to the county. One idea was to form a library district and gather tax dollars to support the libraries. There were many concerns about this option including whether they really wanted to spend the money to fund a voter initiative just to have it voted down. The group determined they needed to conduct a feasibility study for a little as possible, and contacted Cooperative Extension for guidance and help.

Our Response

Having access to a wealth of knowledge and resources on campus, the local extension educator agreed to help the library group plan and design the survey instrument, and also help conduct the study. With help from program area specialists on campus and the Social Sciences Research Unit staff on campus, the survey questionnaire was developed and the study methods designed. For numerous reasons it was decided to conduct a telephone survey of the



sample population. The library group recruited several volunteers to serve as callers, in order to save money on the project. Staff from the Social Sciences Research Unit and the county Extension Educator conducted trainings for the volunteers in proper telephone survey protocol. Because of a willingness of the volunteers to help, and work conducted by extension faculty, the feasibility study was completed for about \$1,300 instead of \$5,000 if they would have had to contract out all of the work.

Program Outcomes

The study probed several questions about voters and touched on issues such as current library usage and the desired future for the library system in Valley County. The main question the study was trying to answer was whether voters would vote in favor of a countywide library district. To that end, based on the sample population polled, all voting precincts

indicated that greater than 50% of the voters would support a library district. This information has given the library group direction and encouragement to continue on with developing plans for a Valley County library district.

The Future

The library group plans to put an initiative before the voters of Valley County in 2005. Because of study findings, they realize the areas they need to concentrate on to generate additional support. Also, they now have a set of reasons why some voters would not support the district. This is valuable information for them to use as they design the district and put the initiative together.

A copy of the study report was given to both libraries in Valley County and the State Library in Boise. Because of the work we accomplished in Valley County, at an affordable cost, a similar library group in Bannock County has contacted Cooperative Extension to explore the possibilities of conducting a similar study for their county library district effort.

For More Information

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