



Helping the Nevada economy:

How Cooperative Extension programs create jobs, spark investments

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Overview

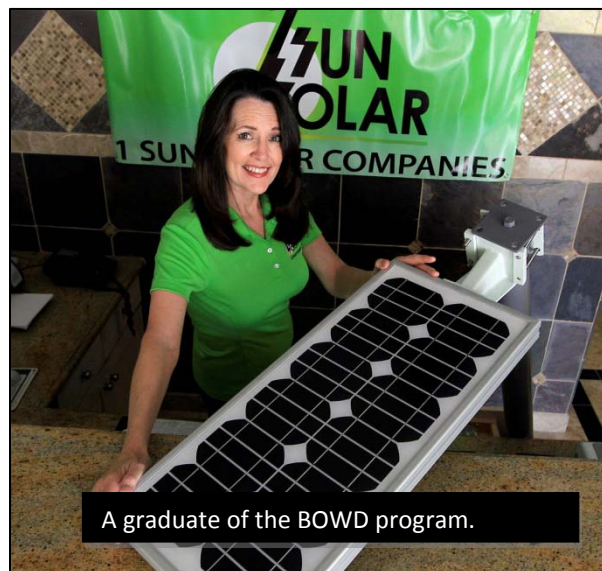
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is a good investment for the state of Nevada. Every state dollar going to Cooperative Extension leverages funding from federal and county governments. The three-way (county, federal and state) funding partnership established by Nevada Revised Statutes helps fund 20 Cooperative Extension offices statewide and nearly 150 education and research programs, including the 4-H youth development program. This collaborative funding pays for faculty and staff, who design and implement community programs, many of which are directly putting Nevadans to work or helping them establish businesses that are putting our residents to work. UNCE grants – up to \$5 million a year – pay for these programs, and these investments contribute to economic output and activity across the state.



Specific programs

UNCE programs tackle Nevada’s unemployment and economic development challenges in many different ways. Here are some specific programs we have implemented:

- UNCE Economic Development Specialist Buddy Borden launched the **Business Opportunity and Workforce Development (BOWD) program** to train small business owners and help them develop relationships with the government entities with whom they want to do business. One business owner was able to triple her revenues in one year. “You can’t put a dollar value on the opportunities that open up to you in a class like that,” she said.
- UNCE’s **Business Retention and Expansion program** identifies current business needs and barriers that may restrict a business’s growth or encourage it to relocate. Keeping a business is often easier than recruiting a new business, so UNCE works with the Clark County Economic Development department to help businesses overcome obstacles so they’ll stay put and give jobs to Nevadans.



- UNCE is working with the Nevada office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development (USDA RD) and the Governor’s Office of Economic Development to help rural counties diversify and improve their economies. The **Stronger Economies Together (SET) program** combines the community development expertise of UNCE faculty with detailed planning data to help the eight rural counties of the Western Nevada Development District collaborate on regional economic development and help the state reach Gov. Brian Sandoval’s economic development goal of bringing 50,000 new jobs to Nevada by 2014.
- UNCE Leadership Specialist Carl Dahlen, responding to requests from Nevada’s cities and towns, has completed 12 **community assessments** in the last three years. These assessments identify strengths and weaknesses and help civic leaders plan for the future.
- Lander County Extension Educator Rod Davis works with a team trying to identify industries that might benefit by locating in former mining sites where there is an established infrastructure but the land is no longer of value for mining. That effort is part of his **Lander County Sustainable Economic Development program**, which seeks to modulate the severe fluctuations in the Battle Mountain economy due to the rapid expansion and contraction of mining activity.

Helping Nevada communities prosper

Although some UNCE programs are new and are in response to Nevada’s recent economic downturn, many of the **economic diversification efforts** conducted by Extension faculty have been going on for years. Here are some examples of ongoing programs that have helped Nevada’s economy over the years:



Several economic programs are ongoing.

Economic research

Tom Harris and the UNCE-supported University Center for Economic Development (UCED) provide economic development research, technical assistance and educational services to rural and urban areas interested in community development. “We look at identifying the next potential industry,” Harris said. Other Cooperative Extension programs have worked with local communities to analyze their housing development strategy with an eye toward making these small communities more attractive to industry.

Quality day-care for working parents

Having reliable, professional day care makes it easier for parents to get and keep their jobs. Cooperative Extension does its part by providing Nevada childcare centers with free or low-cost professional development. Each year UNCE's early childhood education team develops new curricula to teach early childhood professionals in Nevada.

Growing Tourism

In several communities around the state, Cooperative Extension educators have been instrumental in helping local leaders establish flourishing tourism initiatives. **Eagles & Agriculture** brings bird watchers to Douglas County during the early spring when tourism is traditionally slow. With the help of Extension Community and Organizational Development Specialist Marlene Rebori, **White Pine County** is looking to promote its recreational opportunities to tourists. **Lincoln County** has launched its own events to highlight the area's rural beauty, recreation and agricultural products. "People come out here, see how beautiful it is and then want to come back," said Lincoln County Extension Educator Holly Gatzke. "Restaurants, gas stations and hotels benefit from the tourism."



Job training

Extension looks for ways to tackle more than one issue with a single program. A good example is our Bootstraps program, which puts out-of-work and out-of-school youth to work on natural resource programs. Participants learn crucial job skills while helping the environment. Our BMP program at Lake Tahoe trains contractors in how to install erosion controlling landscaping, helping them expand their marketable skills while helping the delicate ecosystem of the lake. Our "green industry" program provides practical skills and knowledge for workers employed in nurseries and landscaping jobs.

Helping agricultural producers become more profitable

Many associate Cooperative Extension with its work with farmers, and that effort continues. Herds & Harvest is a new three-year Cooperative Extension program designed to **help make Nevada farmers and ranchers more profitable**. Some of the agricultural producers coming to Herds & Harvest seminars around the state are experienced but many are new to business – such as the small-acreage farmer near Logandale who increased his alfalfa yields by 76 percent after listening to UNCE Alternative Crop Specialist Jay Davison give a talk on optimum fertilization for grass and alfalfa. "Everyone in Nevada wins when we can trace the origin of our agriculture products," said Cooperative Extension Central/Northeast Area Director Loretta

Singletary. “Helping Nevada producers ensures that our state can feed itself and **purchasing power stays in our state.**” Here are some examples of ongoing programs that have helped Nevada’s agricultural producers become more profitable:

Business plans

Cooperative Extension educators in rural counties are increasingly offering Nevadans help with the business of farming and ranching. Northeast Clark County Extension Educator Carol Bishop helps residents develop business plans to provide goods and services needed in her remote community. She also coaches farmers on how to design enterprise budgets that help them track their expenses and revenues.



Carol Bishop demonstrates an enterprise budget.

New markets for agricultural goods

Lincoln County Extension Educator Holly Gatzke helps small-acreage farmers develop business relationships with Las Vegas restaurants and has planted test plots for different berries being sought by Las Vegas chefs. She also secured a grant to start the local processing of food products in her county. This blossoming small-farm program also connects Nevada growers with a ready and lucrative market of urban restaurants in San Francisco and Los Angeles. A UNCE survey of these farmers indicates that 80 percent are expanding, hiring more people and increasing the size of their farms to meet the growing need. Producers are diversifying their crops and considering a farming cooperative to better market their products.

Diversified agriculture

Cooperative Extension has helped alfalfa farmers in central Nevada become more profitable by helping them establish a teff crop and a market for the small grain and forage produced by teff. The number of acres committed to growing teff has tripled in Churchill, Lyon and Pershing counties. Cooperative Extension has helped establish a market for the crop, facilitating meetings between teff growers and groups from Ethiopian communities in California and Nevada who want to supply teff to ethnic markets across the country. Teff grain returns an average of \$89.34 more per acre than alfalfa in northwestern Nevada and uses only two-thirds the water. Teff forage from Nevada is marketed as high-quality horse hay for an average price of \$150 per ton – 50 percent more than the highest quality alfalfa from Nevada in 2010.

Collaborative Resource Stewardship

Cooperative Extension has helped ranchers develop new methods for improving both rangeland conditions and the number of cows that graze on public land through science-based grazing strategies,

handling procedures and vegetation monitoring. Riparian areas have recovered at the same time the livestock numbers supported by the range have increased.

Cattlemen's Update

Livestock producers have seen up to 10 percent increases in profits from attending these series of seminars on production techniques, low stress livestock handling, corral system evaluation and ranch employee training.



Weed prevention

In states like Nevada, noxious weeds cost the state through lost tourism, reduced habitat for livestock and wildlife, and encroachment on farmlands. Invasions of Eurasian water milfoil ruin swimming holes and beaches; perennial pepperweed infestations foul stream banks, damage water clarity and ruin fish habitat. One study by UNCE found that weeds are costing the state up to \$12 million a year in reduced recreation, with weeds discouraging anglers, hunters, horseback riders, campers and hikers. Noxious weeds also diminish the market value of land. Cooperative Extension battles the problem and prevents these types of losses many ways:

- By conducting dozens of workshops for hundreds of land managers on how to best control and eradicate weeds
- Running programs that help unemployed youth learn job skills while spraying for weeds or eliminating encroaching woodlands
- Developing a statewide Early Detection Rapid Response team program and using science to explore how to prevent noxious weed invasions on Western farms

Helping children stay in school and learn job skills

Cooperative Extension has many programs designed to help youth develop better study skills so they can **stay in school longer** or be better prepared when they enter the job market. These programs not only produce more **skilled workers** for employers; in many cases, they introduce **entrepreneurial skills to Nevada's next generation** of small business owners. Here are some of those programs:

4-H

There are more than 46,000 young people engaged in 4-H programs across the state of Nevada. A long-term study by Tufts University has found that 4-H'ers get better grades, are nearly twice as likely to go to college and are more likely to pursue careers in science, engineering or computer technology – skills

that are needed in the Nevada workforce. The 4-H program promotes life skills through community and project clubs, military and 4-H Afterschool programs, and school enrichment programs.

Youth Worker Training

Youth Worker Training is a program designed to increase the knowledge and skills of youth workers, paid and volunteer, who work with school-age youth (K-12) primarily in out-of-school-time settings. In 2010, the Youth Worker Training program provided professional development to nearly 300 youth workers who supervise some 8,740 Nevada youth participating in out-of-school-time programs. Cooperative Extension's Tools of the Trade curriculum is used across the country, and is mandatory for any after-school program that receives grants from the National 4-H Council or MetLife. This year the module will be taught in 11 states and is expected to reach more than 5,500 after-school workers.



Bootstraps crew at work.

Career Edge

This workforce readiness program for high school students gives hundreds of students each year a chance to develop leadership and organizational skills. They become better job candidates by learning how to properly dress, interview and fill out job applications and resumes.

Family Storyteller

This program helps parents and students learn the value of reading, language skills and study habits. Parents increase their ability to use English, helping them in the job market. Nearly 12,000 Nevada families, 80 percent of them Hispanic, have participated in the program.

Mini-Society

This program teaches children entrepreneurship concepts. They design and develop their own society, creating a name, flag and currency. Children identify opportunities and establish their own businesses to provide goods and services to their fellow citizens.

Project MAGIC

Since the mid 1990s, national award-winning Project MAGIC has graduated more than 3,000 juvenile offenders who have not re-entered the justice system, saving taxpayers an estimated \$5.4 million in incarceration costs. Probation staff estimate only 10 percent of graduates are further involved in the juvenile justice system compared to 30 percent for other youth in Nevada.

Protecting homes

Our homes are typically the biggest single investment we make in our lives, and some Cooperative Extension programs are designed to **help protect and enhance that investment**. Here are some of those programs:

Living with Fire

This is a comprehensive, multi-agency program aimed at teaching homeowners how to live more safely in high wildfire-hazard environments. The program, encompassing research and education, was developed in 1997 as a result of a collaboration between University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE), Nevada's Agricultural Experiment Station and the Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators, a group of 12 Nevada and California firefighting agencies. Fuels reduction projects in 18 Nevada communities have resulted in 7,962 tons of wildfire fuels being removed and 1,089 acres treated.



Nevada Radon Education Program

This partnership with the Nevada State Health Division educates Nevadans about the possible health risk posed by elevated levels of radon in the home. Cooperative Extension has distributed more than 10,000 kits and has developed a deep database that helps pinpoint where radon levels are highest. For instance, results indicate that nearly 20 percent of the homes in Washoe County have had radon levels above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Action Level. In Douglas County, nearly 1,300 tests have been conducted and more than 40 percent of the homes have elevated radon levels. Extension's efforts to detect the problem and educate the public on ways to safely eradicate the danger could save lives, as more than 20,000 Americans die of radon-related lung cancer each year.

Battling obesity and other health problems

Helping Nevadans eat better

Each year, UNCE brings hundreds of thousands of dollars to Nevada from the federal government for programs aimed at improving Nevadans' health. We teach nutrition and exercise to school children, gardening to senior citizens and healthier eating habits to targeted audiences at high risk of developing obesity-related illnesses, including heart problems, diabetes and cancer. All of these efforts help improve the quality of life for citizens and the state's bottom line by keeping people out of hospitals.

Cooperative Extension also is saving Nevada money with programs that help Nevada's seniors live healthier more independent lives, keeping them in the workforce, and off of disability and out of expensive nursing homes.