



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Bringing the University to You

## Fact Sheet 03-03

# Lander County Needs Assessment

## Part 2

Rod Davis, Extension Educator

### Introduction to Lander County

Lander County is located in north central Nevada. It has two distinct population centers: Battle Mountain and the combined communities of Austin, Kingston and Gillman Springs. It encompassed 5,621 square miles. Over 85 percent of the county is public lands, managed by federal agencies. Interstate 80 transects the county, east to west on the northern end of the county as does state highway 50 in the south. State highway 305 links the towns of Battle Mountain and Austin. 30 miles south of Austin on state highway 376 are the communities of Gillman Springs and Kingston.

2000 census data reports Lander County's total population to be 5,794, of which about 5300 reside in the greater Battle Mountain area and 340 in Austin. Both population centers have been mining dependent with Agriculture and Natural Resources also supporting the local economies. Recent downturns in the mining industry have put the county in serious economic stress.

### Needs Assessment

Nevada Cooperative Extension policy requires that Extension educational program and applied research efforts be focused upon local needs. The purpose of this assessment was to therefore identify issues of importance to the citizens of Lander County and provide a foundation upon which Extension could build such educational and research programs.

In the fall of 2000, Lander County Extension, in cooperation with the Battle Mountain Chamber of Commerce, Lander County Government and the Lander County Sheriff's office utilized a mail survey to get citizen input on the perceived general needs of Lander County. The survey asked respondents to rank in order of importance to their community five general program areas. The communities of Battle Mountain and Austin-Kingston-Gillman Springs were surveyed separately.

Community Development ranked as the highest priority in the both the Battle Mountain and Austin Communities. Other program areas are listed below in descending order of importance.

Battle Mountain	Austin-Kingston Gillman Springs
1. Community Development	1. Community Development
2. Children Youth & Families	2. Natural Resources
3. Natural Resources	3. Health & Nutrition
4. Health & Nutrition	4. Agriculture
5. Agriculture	5. Children Youth & Families

It was the consensus of this group that further feedback from both communities was needed to identify specific program thrusts within the general umbrella of "Community Development." As a result, a follow up mail survey was conducted by Extension in the fall of 2002. This survey was mailed to 16% of the registered voters within Lander County. Surveys sent to residence in the Austin-Kingston-Gillman Springs communities were color coded to allow data to be compiled and evaluated separately.

The needs assessment advisory panel broke community development into seven sub-categories:

- Economic Development
- Zoning Enforcement & Revision
- Emergency Services
- Community Beautification
- Essential Community Services
- Leadership/Management
- Law Enforcement

Respondents were asked how much more effort was needed in each of these seven program areas. A "1" indicated that effort was very much needed; a "5" indicated that no additional effort was needed.

The University of Nevada, Reno is an Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, creed, national origin, veteran status, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation in any program or activity it conducts. The University of Nevada employs only United States citizens and aliens lawfully authorized to work in the United States.

Respondents were instructed that these ratings should not reflect the quality or current state of a program area; only how much more effort they believed should be given them in the future.

## Mailings and Return Rate

Battle Mountain & Surrounding Areas	
Number of Surveys Mailed	338
Number of Surveys Returned	87
Return Rate	25%

Austin-Kingston-Gillman Springs	
Number of Surveys Mailed	51
Number of Surveys Returned	22
Return Rate	43%

## Survey Results

### Results from the Battle Mountain Community

	← Efforts very much needed					No Opinion	Total
	No effort needed →						
	1	2	3	4	5		
Economic Development	70	10	5	0	2	0	87
Zoning Enforcement & Revision	33	23	14	6	5	3	84
Emergency Services	19	14	26	16	9	1	85
Community Beautification	31	25	14	9	4	1	84
Essential Community Services	29	20	27	5	3	1	85
Leadership/Management	37	13	21	7	6	2	86
Law Enforcement	26	21	18	12	6	0	83

## Conclusions-Battle Mountain

An initial look at this data would indicate that economic development is an area that respondents perceive as a program priority. Ratings of "2" and "3" however cannot be ignored as they too indicate the need for some level of programming. In order to prioritize the program areas a weighted mean average for each was determined with the following results:

- Economic Development =1.3
- Community Beautification =2.1
- Zoning Enforcement & Revision =2.1
- Essential Community Services =2.2
- Leadership/Management =2.2
- Law Enforcement =2.4
- Emergency Services =2.5

This analysis certainly demonstrates the need for programming in economic development. Significant as well are community beautification and zoning. These issues are inter-related in Battle Mountain. Many business

and private dwellings have been abandoned or fallen into disrepair. The county currently has limited legal options for the abatement of these problems. The data also suggests that all of the program areas are perceived by the respondents as important enough to justify Extension education and research efforts.

### Results from the Austin-Kingston-Gillman Springs Community

	← Efforts very much needed					No Opinion	Total
	No effort needed →						
	1	2	3	4	5		
Economic Development	18	1	0	0	5	0	24
Zoning Enforcement & Revision	4	3	3	3	6	2	21
Emergency Services	5	4	6	4	1	1	21
Community Beautification	8	6	1	3	1	1	20
Essential Community Services	8	6	1	3	1	1	20
Leadership/Management	9	4	3	1	3	1	21
Law Enforcement	8	3	2	4	3	1	21

## Conclusions-Austin-Kingston-Gillman Springs

Applying the same weighted average analysis to the data from Austin, Kingston and Gillman Springs communities the following results were calculated:

- Economic Development = 1.8
- Essential Community Services = 2.1
- Community Beautification =2.1
- Leadership/Management = 2.2
- Law Enforcement = 2.5
- Emergency Services = 2.6
- Zoning Enforcement & Revision = 3.2

Again economic development was rated as needing the most effort. As in Battle Mountain the other program areas are perceived by the respondents as important enough to justify Extension education and research efforts.

## References

- Breazeale, Don, (1999) Pershing County Needs Assessment FS#99-29, Nevada Cooperative Extension, University of Nevada, Reno
- Lewis, S.R (1993) Community Needs Assessment : Douglas County, Nevada Cooperative Extension, University of Nevada, Reno
- Singletery, Loretta (2000) Lyon County Needs Assessment, FS#00-33, Nevada Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nevada Reno
- Editor, Lander County, Nevada, Web Page, <http://www.landercounty.com/>
- Editor, 2002, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension 2000-2002 Community Meeting, unpublished