

Food and Ag Development Center Success Story: Glacier Processing

Vandevanter Meats has been fulfilling the meat processing needs of ranchers in northwest Montana since 1945. The state-inspected plant operates at its maximum capacity of 1,100 head per year, with processing dates scheduled 18 to 24 months in advance.

With the impending retirement of the plant's second-generation owner and no apparent buyers to take over, the business faced closure. However, thanks to support from the Montana Farmers Union, Mission West Community Development Partners stepped in to assist local ranchers in forming the Glacier Processing Cooperative (GPC) to purchase, operate, and expand the existing facility.

Mission West also helped GPC develop a feasibility study and business plan, essential for applying for two federal grants and a recently awarded GTA grant. If the federal grants are awarded, these funds will support the purchase of the facility, an expansion phase and new equipment, thus increasing the facility's overall efficiency, capacity, and product diversity.

There remained, however, a crucial need for capital to acquire the facility. Through its Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program, Montana West Economic Development provided a \$1.7 million loan to GPC, enabling them to commence operations in spring 2024.

Total Member-Owners: 37

Retained Employees: 8 full-time, 8 part-time

Total Invested Loan Funds: \$1.7 million

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