



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Miles Community College

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**IMAGE:** MCC Ag Students tour the facilities at Quality Meats of Montana in Miles City, MT

### **MCC Teams Up to Develop Meat Processing Program; Awarded \$117k MMPIG Grant**

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Miles Community College, Montana Farm Bureau, and the Montana Meat Processors Association have teamed up to offer a meat processing program, soon to be available at MCC. Statements were released at the beginning of July with initial announcements of the plan to develop the program. The college was also recently a recipient of a Montana Meat Processing Infrastructure Grant, as part of the \$7.5 million of coronavirus relief funds awarded by Montana Governor Steve Bullock and the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA). MCC received \$117,397 to assist with training and education of future students in the planned meat processing program.

MMPIG grants are specifically designed to help aid small and medium-sized businesses in response to the COVID-19 crisis through the adaptation and advancement of meat processing infrastructure and capacity in Montana.

"The impacts of COVID-19 have highlighted how fragile the nation's supply chain can be, especially when it comes to meat processing," said Governor Steve Bullock in a statement released on Montana.gov earlier this week. "It's crucial that our producers have viable options for getting their meat to market. Investing in meat processing infrastructure will help our Montana producers, strengthen local food systems, and bolster food security for Montanans in communities across the state from Plains to Circle."

Funding for the MMPIG was derived from the state's allocation of federal relief dollars made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, with a maximum award of \$150,000. The Montana Department of Agriculture and Department of Livestock worked in conjunction to ensure projects adhered to meat processing rules and regulations and over 60 businesses received funding.

For the past several years, MCC has been working to develop plans for a professional certificate in meat cutting. Recently, the college has been gauging student interest and soliciting funding for the program, which allowed them to apply for the MMPIG grant.

"Meat cutter programs are ideal for community colleges because they offer excellent career technical training," commented Kim Gibbs, agricultural instructor at MCC. "We knew there was a need, and we knew that MCC could fill that void."

Gibbs explained that students could complete their core classes—either online or classroom—as well as do rotating internships by traveling to different processing plants. In addition to general core classes, subjects will also cover meat cutting, sausage making, and recipe development.

Students interested in earning a professional certificate in Meat Processing can apply to the college and begin classes as early as Fall 2020. General studies courses begin Wednesday, September 9 with technical training starting in October. Tuition will be based on the number of credits taken (per the 2020-2021 Tuition & Fee Schedule) and scholarships may be available. This program is not currently eligible for Federal Financial Aid.

For more information about the meat processing program, please contact Kim Gibbs at 406-874-6227 or [gibbsk@milesecc.edu](mailto:gibbsk@milesecc.edu). To apply for admission or to register for fall courses, please visit [www.milesecc.edu/apply](http://www.milesecc.edu/apply) and apply under the Certificate of General Studies program.

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