



Center for Rural Economic Development & Emerging Technologies
UtahStateUniversity

**Annual
Program Report
2025**



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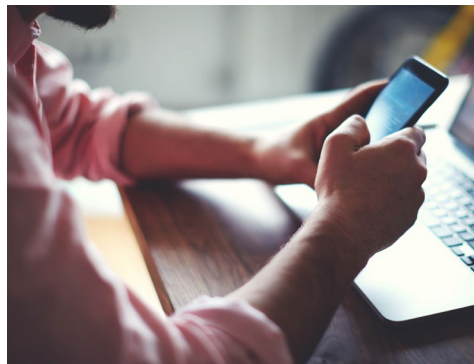
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Center for Rural Economic Development & Emerging Technologies
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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Stakeholder,

January 30, 2026

This year marks a milestone in Utah State University (USU) Extension's long commitment to strengthening rural communities. With approval from the USU Board of Trustees on July 7, 2025, the Rural Online Initiative (ROI) became centralized under the USU Center for Rural Economic Development & Emerging Technologies (CREDET) and officially launched in St. George at the 2026 *What's Up Down South* economic summit. This new structure brings together programs that support our rural workforce, small businesses, and community leaders in a strategic approach to economic growth.

The path to this moment spans generations. Early public works brought electricity and irrigation to rural Utah. Later, Utah's technology sector grew from the achievements of pioneers in computing, software, and digital communication. In the 2000s and 2010s, broadband slowly reached rural towns, and by the 2020s, the diffusion of remote work as a modern business practice created new possibilities for residents seeking professional careers close to home. ROI began during this period and soon became both a statewide and national model for workforce development. The E-Commerce Accelerator followed in 2023 by helping rural businesses enter online markets and generate new revenue streams. These programs now move forward together under one Center dedicated to expanding prosperity and opportunity in rural Utah.

Through CREDET, we envision a rural Utah economy where individuals, families, businesses, and communities can succeed without geographic limits. Our mission is to empower rural communities through research-based education, workforce innovation, and entrepreneurial support to sustain economic growth and provide broad access to emerging technologies. These commitments guide our work across three focus areas:

1. Workforce Development - Employment

The *Rural Online Initiative* will continue to prepare rural residents for remote, hybrid, and digital careers through courses, career mentoring, and structured job placement support. Participants gain practical work skills that lead to steady employment and greater household stability.

2. Business Development - Online Sales Revenue

Through the *E-Commerce Accelerator*, small businesses and agricultural operations receive technical assistance in digital sales, marketing, and online tools. Many have reached new customers, increased online revenues, and strengthened their ability to compete in the digital marketplace.

3. Community Development - Capacity Building

CREDET now supports local community leaders through economic planning and proposal development services. Rural communities often seek access to broadband, telehealth, infrastructure, and workforce funding, but face capacity challenges. Our assistance helps them prepare robust plans and proposals that connect local priorities with state and federal opportunities.

The stories within this report reflect what happens when rural talent, commitment, and access come together. Individuals secure better jobs, small businesses grow, and communities chart clearer paths forward. Utah's rural regions continue to show what is possible when practical support aligns with local determination.

Thank you for your partnership and interest in this work. The progress highlighted in this report represents a shared commitment to stronger rural communities across our state.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PH' with a large, sweeping loop above the letters.

Paul Hill, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Center for Rural Economic Development & Emerging Technologies
Associate Vice President for Economic Development & Extension Professor
Utah State University Extension



2025

E-COMMERCE ACCELERATOR

\$1 MILLION+ generated in new revenue

93 businesses on the waiting list for technical assistance

50

E-commerce websites built

2025

REMOTE WORK PROFESSIONAL COURSE



266

professionals certified



29

counties with outreach events



160

resumes edited



175

workshops



225

career planning meetings



730*

Total Job Placements



≈ 35,187

Urban Utah Jobs

*Jobs reported since 2019: 659 first jobs + 71 subsequent jobs. Of 659 first jobs, 599 are rural. Urban jobs equivalency is calculated based on 599 rural jobs. When adjusted for population sizes, 599 non-Wasatch Front (rural) jobs are similar to 35,187 jobs in urban Wasatch Front counties.

(Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services 2020. Analysis based on the goal of reducing unemployment by 0.5%. Statistics based on the county labor force's current rate of unemployment and extrapolated number of jobs required.)

RESULTS

E-COMMERCE ACCELERATOR (ECA)

The ECA is a mentoring service provided to small rural and agricultural businesses. Its goal is to help clients grow through online sales. With personalized training, clients learn how to create and manage their website and market their products.

105 clients applied to the program in 2025

34

clients successfully completed their e-commerce websites (94% completion rate)

An evaluation of short-term results from January 2024 to December 2025 showed that:

66% of participants had increased confidence

63% felt they had better skills toward creating an e-commerce website

67% had aspirations toward maintaining their e-commerce website

An evaluation of medium-term outcomes from January 2024 to December 2025 showed that:

46 new websites created

36 businesses experienced increased sales revenue from their e-commerce sites



CERTIFIED REMOTE WORK PROFESSIONAL® (CRWP) COURSE

The CRWP course provides remote work training to help participants from rural Utah find meaningful employment opportunities. It provides them with the tools and skills needed to succeed in remote and hybrid jobs. The target counties for the CRWP course are divided into three rural geographic regions (Southeast, Southwest, and Southcentral, with other counties classed into Northern and urban counties -

1. Southeast: Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, Grand, San Juan, Uintah
2. Southwest: Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, Piute, Washington
3. Southcentral: Juab, Millard, Sanpete, Sevier, Wayne, Tooele
4. Northern Region: Box Elder, Cache, Rich, Morgan, Summit, Wasatch
5. Urban Counties: Davis, Salt Lake, Utah, Weber



Table 1 gives a breakdown of the total number of Utah graduates who found employment since the program started in October 2018.

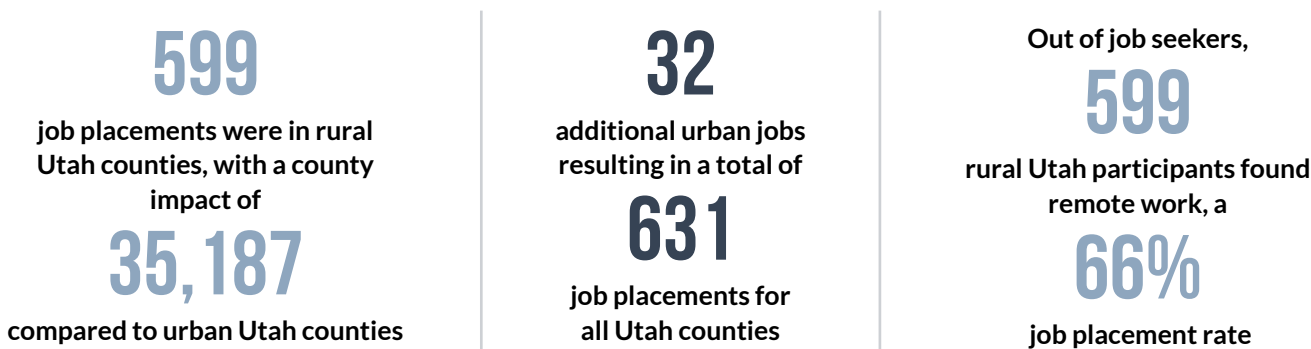


Table 1. Total Utah Job Placements for the CRWP Course by Region (October 2018 - December 2025)

RURAL REGIONS	TOTAL # JOBS PLACED
Southeast (SE)**	230
Southwest (SW)**	186
Southcentral (SC)**	152
Northern Region (NR)**	31
Urban Counties	32
Total	631
County Impact (SE, SW, SC, NR regions only)*	35,273

*When adjusted for population sizes, 599 non-Wasatch Front** (rural) jobs are similar to 35,187 jobs in urban Wasatch Front counties (Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services 2020. Analysis based on the goal of reducing unemployment by 0.5%. Statistics based on the county labor force's current rate of unemployment and extrapolated number of jobs required.)

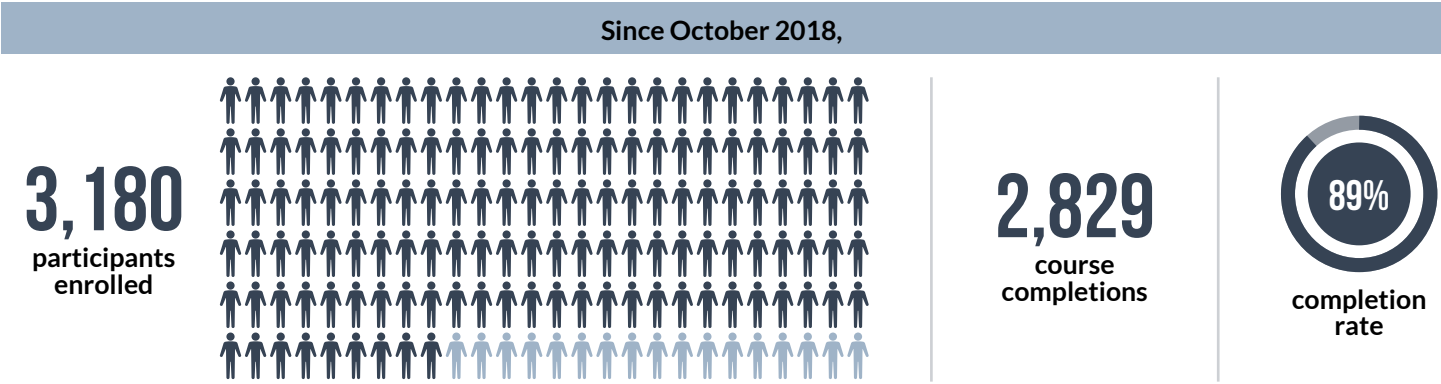
Table 2 presents a breakdown of the number of jobs in each rural county needed to reduce the unemployment rate by 0.5%. It shows ROI's anticipated reduction in unemployment with job placements in rural counties, given unemployment figures. The goal of reducing the unemployment rate by 0.5% was met for 7 counties - Carbon, Daggett, Emery, San Juan, Beaver, Garfield, and Piute.

Table 2. Anticipated Contribution to Reduced Unemployment in Rural Utah Counties

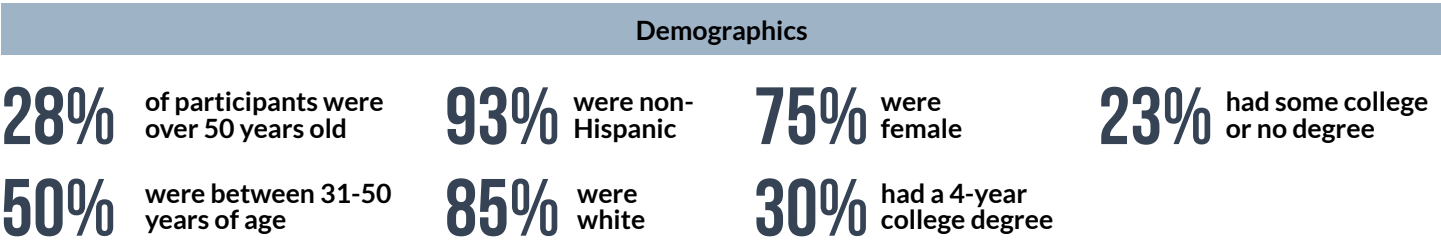
RURAL COUNTIES UNDER ROI'S PURVIEW	** PEOPLE UNEMPLOYED	** JOBS NEEDED FOR 0.5% DECREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	ROI JOB PLACEMENTS (# GRADUATES WHO ARE EMPLOYED)	**ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION TO REDUCTION IN UNEMPLOYMENT (%)
SOUTHEAST				
Carbon	445	43	53	123
Daggett	18	2	8	400
Duchesne	603	39	30	77
Emery	203	22	57	259
Grand	587	31	13	42
San Juan	554	27	33	122
Uintah	1,228	67	36	54
SOUTHWEST				
Beaver	112	14	20	150
Garfield	269	13	20	154
Iron	1,115	125	29	23
Kane	206	19	8	42
Piute	30	2	8	400
Washington	4,201	396	101	26
SOUTHCENTRAL				
Juab	172	29	14	48
Millard	192	30	19	63
Sanpete	472	63	51	81
Sevier	416	49	45	92
Tooele	1,667	175	17	10
Wayne	108	7	6	86

*Unemployment values were internally obtained from the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity (GOEO). Unemployment numbers represent the most recent data for 2020; available April 2021. **These values may have contributed to the reduction in unemployment.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



Based on follow-up surveys, graduates typically take **3.5 to 4 months** to find a remote job.



Short term

An evaluation of short-term outcomes from October 2018 - December 2025 captured changes in participants’ knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations toward seeking remote employment.

Knowledge gain – There were statistically significant differences between pre- and post-tests for all nine modules, indicating increases in participants’ knowledge after completing the CRWP course (Table 3).

Table 3. Pre and Post Test Knowledge-gain for CRWP Participants (October 2018 - December 2025).

MODULE	t	p	MEAN PRE-SCORE	MEAN POST-SCORE	d
Building a Virtual Career	35.07	<.001	9.04	12.27	2.79
Communication	31.17	<.001	14.84	16.26	2.42
Compliance	65.09	<.001	12.89	16.53	2.82
Critical Thinking	59.92	<.001	13.56	16.40	2.41
Productivity	67.21	<.001	12.96	16.56	2.74
Remote Job Development	42.13	<.001	15.56	18.14	3.04
Teams	34.96	<.001	14.90	16.40	2.17
Workday	51.36	<.001	12.60	15.81	3.37
Workflow	31.04	<.001	13.92	15.75	3.03

ATTITUDES



On average, participants felt **neutral** toward their current jobs.

84% felt seeking remote work opportunities was favorable.

70% felt seeking remote work opportunities was beneficial.

62% did not have remote work experience.

92% felt it was important or very important to acquire remote work skills.

57% believed adequate wages were available in their local region.

56% believed job opportunities were available in their local region that matched their long-term goals.

48% planned to stay in their current region for the next three years, 36% were unsure.

When asked about which ideal employment situations were most important,

82%	79%	76%
said flexible hours.	said good manager relationship.	said personal growth.

SKILLS

On average, participants had high overall scores across all skills assessed.

After the course, participants felt they had better abilities to:



Balance their professional and personal lives
(M = 4.09, SD = .62)



Manage their professional and personal productivity
(M = 4.27, SD = .64)



Solve problems
(M = 4.17, SD = .67)



Communicate digitally
(M = 4.20, SD = .68)



Use online technology
(M = 4.20, SD = .63)



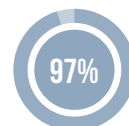
Work as a team member
(M = 4.16, SD = .68)



Manage their careers
(M = 4.24, SD = .60)

ASPIRATIONS

After completing the course:



felt their value as a remote worker improved.



felt empowered to seek remote work.



had intentions to seek flexible work opportunities.





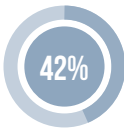
Medium- and Long-Term Outcomes

A short survey was sent to all **322** graduates of the CRWP August 2024 to August 2025 cohorts (N = 322). With a **28%** response rate, a total of **91** participants completed the survey (n = 91).

PERCEIVED COST-BENEFIT

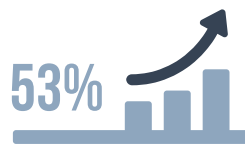


paid to take the course.



thought the course was worth more than what they paid. This suggests those who paid thought **the personal benefits of completing the course outweighed the registration cost.**

ANTICIPATED INCOME



Overall, a participant who found remote work experienced a **53% increase** in median salary.

Total salaries across all respondents who found remote work also increased by **24%.**



ANTICIPATED INCOME

Roughly **58%** of those who found remote work believed their median salaries would likely increase by **20%** over the next year.

COMMUTE

55%



About **55%** of participants drove to a physical workplace before finding remote work.

14%



Since finding remote work, **14%** drove to a physical workplace. Across all respondents, the average monthly miles driven decreased by **74%** after finding remote work, resulting in an estimated fuel savings of **\$57.57** per month.



This reduction in the total number of miles driven per month equated to a total reduction of **0.18** tons of carbon emissions.

STUDENT AND CLIENT EXPERIENCES

REMOTE WORK

"I have worked in Price since 2021. I took both the Certified Remote Work Professional course and the Certified Remote Sales Professional course. They were both a great benefit to me, and shortly thereafter, I was able to take my job remote. Because of what I learned in those courses, I was also able to land a raise and better benefits. Now I have better work/life balance and make more money. I will be forever grateful to have these experiences as they have taken me out of my comfort zone and helped me to grow in the business world."

- **Debbie Sackett, Carbon County**

"As an older, mostly retired person, I thought remote work was just a concept until I started the course. It helped me focus on preparing for remote roles. With support from the ROI team, I improved my resume and added teaching opportunities to my job search. That led to a new role as an adjunct instructor of psychology at Utah Tech University in St. George."

- **Pamela Webster, Washington County**

"After spending several years as a stay-at-home mother, I enrolled in the Remote Work Professional course through the Rural Online Initiative to strengthen my confidence, develop marketable skills, and learn to clearly communicate my experience. The courses provided practical experience in presenting my strengths, navigating remote work culture, and preparing for interviews. By applying what I learned, I secured a remote, part-time position as a Program Coordinator, where I use my background in digital design and visual communications to support businesses and empower others."

- **StacyAnn Maxwell, Carbon County**

E-COMMERCE ONLINE SALES REVENUE

"We launched our website not even a year ago thanks to the ECA program, and we have already had great success. On top of our regular sales, our website has brought us in about \$40,000 of extra sales revenue. We have been grateful for the success and are excited to see what the future of our ecommerce website will bring to us and other Box Elder County ag businesses in our community."

- **Justin and Amanda Norr, Norr Family Farms, Box Elder County**

"My family has been selling beef direct for several years by word of mouth, but when my dad learned about the USU E-Commerce program we were excited to expand our business and reach a new audience. Having the website up and functional has allowed us to reach new customers and increase the amount of direct-to-consumer sales that we have at Heart L Ranch in Piute County. We've made about \$10,000 in extra sales through the website in about four months."

- **Mikyla Bagley, Heart L Ranch, Piute County**

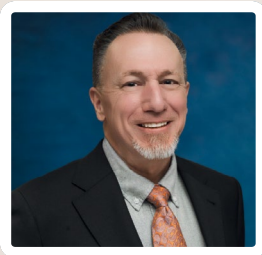
"The ECA Program has been a huge asset to our business. Even though we are based in Millard County, we have had people as far as New Jersey find us online through our website and purchase our meat. In the past year of having our website up, we have made over \$250,000 on top of our regular sales. Most people find us on Google and stop into the store to buy their meat. We've never been so busy, it's been great!"

- **Aaron Rees, Provident Meat Co., Millard County**

CREDET TEAM



Paul Hill



Dominic Bria



Amanda D. Ali



Kaylee Hanks



Jordan Leonard



Trenton Willson



Jake Marino



Mike Sarles



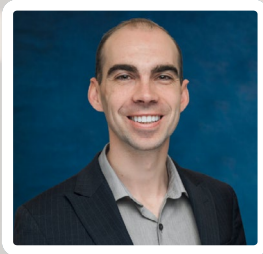
Becky Newman



Marta Nielsen



Abbey Bean



Jacob Webb



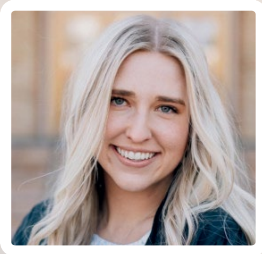
StacyAnn Maxwell



Austin Holmes



Annette Saxton



Kenna Sanders



Genesis Schaerrer



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