

USU Extension Forms Environmental Technical Assistance Resource Center

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Utah State University Extension, in collaboration with Montana State University, has established a new technical assistance center to bridge the gap between grant funding and under-resourced communities.

This initiative, part of the Mountains and Plains Thriving Communities Collaborative, will help community leaders access Environmental Protection Agency grant money and other federal and state funding to support projects focused on environmental and energy stewardship.

“This partnership will empower communities across Utah to launch, secure funding for, and successfully implement projects that drive the change in rural communities,” said Ken White, USU Extension vice president.

Leading the effort is Austin Holmes, USU Extension’s new community resource and engagement specialist. Holmes will oversee initiatives in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming, assisting communities in finding funding opportunities, developing grant proposals, planning projects, and managing projects that receive funding. His work will involve close collaboration with nonprofit organizations, associations and work organizations, faith-based groups, and more.

The center’s projects will address various issues, including air and water quality, food security, and other critical concerns, with a special emphasis on helping rural communities.

“Wildfires, extreme heat, air pollution – all these things negatively impact many people to varying degrees,” Holmes said. “But they disproportionately impact rural communities. The idea behind the Mountains and Plains Thriving Communities Collaborative is to find ways to properly engage with these issues so that the most vulnerable and the most negatively impacted are having their voices heard and having those issues fixed.”

Since its launch earlier this month, the center has initiated several projects, including an urban farming initiative in the Salt Lake City area and a workforce development program that creates environmental internships for youth.

“We are really looking forward to helping as many people as possible,” Holmes said. “I encourage anyone with an idea for a project to reach out. Even if it doesn’t necessarily fall under what we’re doing, we can at least point them in the right direction for resources that might help them.”

To apply for assistance with a project, visit the [Mountains and Plains Thriving Communities Collaborative](#) website or contact Holmes directly at austin.holmes@usu.edu.

Contact

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