USU and UIRA Announce Critical Supply Chain Database

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SALT LAKE CITY, UT — Utah State University recently partnered with the Utah Industry Resources Alliance (UIRA) and the state of Utah to create an online supply chain database to help Utah’s manufacturing sector engage with the broader marketplace. Developed over years, this online solution, known as CONNEX™ UTAH, will enhance Utah manufacturers’ abilities to connect with one another, be discovered and ultimately provide opportunities to grow their businesses.

The recent impetus to engage all Utah manufacturers with CONNEX UTAH came from the need to quickly identify potential critical COVID personal protective equipment (PPE) producers. Early in the pandemic, the UIRA worked diligently to find companies that could produce face masks, gowns and face shields.

Stephen Reed, director of USU’s Utah Manufacturing Extension Service, said during the early days of the pandemic, it was all-hands-on-deck.

“Members of the UIRA were working collaboratively to identify anyone who had the capability to produce COVID-19-related PPE, such as face masks, face shields, sanitizers and other critical-use items,” he said. “This effort very much relied on the ‘historical knowledge’ of the UIRA members to find people working in cut-and-sew operations.”

With the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds identified, USU and the UIRA approached the legislature for funding to support onboarding all Utah manufacturers into the CONNEX UTAH platform and identifying critical PPE suppliers in the state. USU is leading this effort in conjunction with the UIRA partners, using a call center to reach out to every manufacturer in Utah, and new companies are being added every day.

CONNEX UTAH is a statewide manufacturing supply chain, workforce and research and development connection solution offered free of charge to manufacturers in Utah.

“This is the most unique and powerful supply chain tool out there,” Reed said. “It not only has the ability to search for companies by NAICS or SIC classification codes, but it is designed to search for companies by production process capability, equipment, materials, certifications and regions of the state. CONNEX UTAH is a real game changer that will help Utah companies expand into the marketplace.”

Platform users have the ability to look for posted RFI/RFP/RFQ opportunities collected in the CONNEX UTAH Exchange Center. The Exchange Center is the ultimate business-to-business marketplace connection tool. The platform’s primary goal is helping Utah manufacturers qualify for and grow their business and thrive.

To request CONNEX UTAH platform access, visit https://utahira.org/, then click on the CONNEX UTAH tab at the top of the page. You can also contact support@utahira.org to request an account.

CONNEX UTAH is also interoperable with the Manufacturers Marketplace developed by the National Association of Manufacturers and the COVID-19 Response Tool. All of these databases are available at no cost during the pandemic to help streamline critical connections within the supply chain.

The COVID-19 Response Tool is accessible both locally and nationally and is searchable by government and industry to efficiently link manufacturers/suppliers and organizations seeking to purchase much-needed materials and products, such as masks, PPE, medical devices and component parts. Suppliers are being added daily. To access the COVID-19 Response Tool, visit COVID-19.ManufacturersMarketplace.US.

About Utah Industry Resource Alliance (UIRA)
Utah Industry Resource Alliance is the premier source for assessing needs and providing solutions available through public and private resources. UIRA is part of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership based at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, with professionals living and working in communities across the
The primary focus is to help Utah’s manufacturers thrive.

The MEP alliance pools the collective expertise of the following: USU’s Utah Manufacturing Extension Service and the Manufacturing/Outdoor Products Support Hub; Impact Utah; the University of Utah Manufacturing Extension Partnership (UUMEP); the World Trade Center Utah (WTC Utah); the Utah Manufacturers Association (UMA), the Utah Advanced Materials & Manufacturing Initiative (UAMMI); and the Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA). This powerful team provides access to manufacturing specialists, application engineers and research professionals from the top organizations and universities in the state.

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**CONNEX UTAH**

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