

# MAKING REMOTE WORK FOR RURAL AMERICA



## VISION

We see a vibrant future for rural America, where residents are not limited by geographic opportunity but capable of obtaining well-paying remote jobs through reliable internet connectivity.

*Talent is evenly distributed, but opportunity is not. Our mission is to help change that.*

## ABOUT

In July 2018, the Utah Legislature appropriated funding to Utah State University Extension for the development and delivery of the Remote Online Initiative (ROI), a remote work training program, across 15 rural counties. Since October 2018, the program expanded to serve 21 rural Utah counties and land grant institutions in Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana.

## PROGRAM NEED

High unemployment rates and rural-urban migration are challenges facing rural communities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). However, with strong broadband infrastructure across rural communities, the Utah Legislature recognized the potential for residents to benefit from remote work employment opportunities (Utah Legislature, 2018). With the ROI program, communities can provide ongoing education, leverage existing talent and infrastructure, and strengthen county economic bases without requiring residents or new businesses to relocate. The ROI program provides a unique way to reduce unemployment, address negative net migration trends, diversify economies, and increase median incomes throughout rural America.

## SPECIALIZED REMOTE WORK TRAINING

The ROI program began with the Master Remote Work Professional (MRWP) certificate course and expanded to include the Master Remote Work Leader (MRWL) certificate course. Both courses (i.e., micro credentials) are self-paced and delivered in cohorts over one month. The MRWP certification teaches participants the skills required to function successfully in a remote work environment and how to find a remote job. The MRWL course was designed for businesses located in urban Utah counties that experience a tight labor market. It provides training to business leaders on the best practices and core skills for creating remote work environments and leading remote employees.

Learn remote work skills from **experts.**

Access the only **personalized**, research-based remote work training program.

Enjoy individual **career coaching.**

Benefit from an **experiential** remote work learning environment.

☆ **IMPACT**

A total of 313 MRWP Utah participants found remote work. When adjusted for population sizes, 313 non-Wasatch Front\* (rural) jobs are similar to 18,512 jobs in urban Wasatch Front counties. The goal for 2022 is 400 job placements. Survey results indicated total salaries across all participants who found remote work increased by 70%. Reduced commutes decreased carbon emissions by 0.83 metric tons per month. The MRWL course is offered every other month; therefore, participant outcomes are reflective of 11 cohorts. Survey results showed 25% of participants created 25 new remote work positions. The goal for 2022 is 225 new remote work positions. About 24% of participants intended to convert 51 existing on-site job positions to remote, and 41% intended to create 77 future remote work positions.

\*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.

💡 **THE FUTURE OF WORK**

The ROI program is dedicated to ensuring vibrant rural communities. Our values help to ensure we meet our goals and effectively serve rural residents. Our funds are committed to continuous program improvement as we strive to provide participants with high-quality educational experiences. The program plans to support: (a) training and strategic support for statewide efforts to increase remote work opportunities for rural Utah and (b) new funding efforts from the Economic Development Administration to provide MRWL training for communities affected by COVID-19 in eight counties outside ROI's purview.



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