



OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2018

EXTENSION  
UtahStateUniversity

# Rural Online Initiative and Rural Economic Development Incentive

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the 2018 Utah General Legislative Session, H.B. 327 and H.B. 390, the Rural Online Initiative (ROI) and the Rural Economic Development Incentive (REDI) respectively, were signed into law by Gov. Gary R. Herbert, changing the landscape of rural economic development.

Funding for the ROI was appropriated to Utah State University Extension for program development and delivery across targeted rural counties. The focus of the ROI program is to provide Utah's rural workforce and businesses with education, training, and services for online opportunities in remote employment, freelance work, and e-commerce. The following is a synopsis of 2018 programming and projections for 2019.




### COMMUNITY EVENTS (Town Halls or similar events)



10 EVENTS  
in  
8 COUNTIES

 ~210  
participants

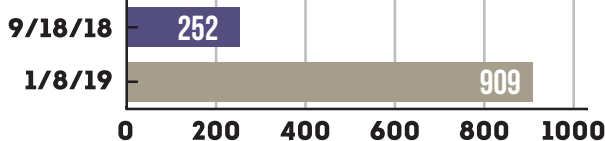
### COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

 287 PARTICIPANTS  
use Slack software as part  
of Utah's largest network of  
remote workers

 7  
news releases,  
including Forbes  
Magazine



### WEEKLY NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS



### CAREER COACHING SESSIONS

~54 individual sessions

4 Remote Work Professional Certificate courses

12 counties with participants

### PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS (with community, school, and local leaders)

 38  
EVENTS

 11 COUNTIES  
with participants

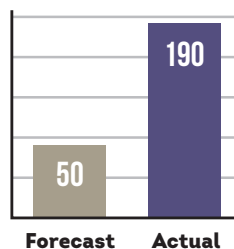
 ~290  
leaders

### SCHOLARSHIPS



16 scholarships for additional training, with new applications each week (valued at about \$5,000 in tuition thus far)

### ENROLLED IN INITIAL COURSES



## ROI EMPLOYEES HIRED

To deliver this program, a senior program coordinator, three program coordinators and one staff assistant have been hired. Program coordinators have been assigned several counties to oversee, and the team is now in place and actively serving the targeted communities.


# “MASTER REMOTE WORK PROFESSIONAL” ONLINE CERTIFICATE COURSE

After meeting the skill requirements and earning their certificates, ROI clients will be assisted with job placement in partnership with Utah’s Department of Workforce Services.




To date, there are  
**>250 COURSE APPLICANTS**

The  
**3<sup>RD</sup>** Master Remote Work Professional online certificate course began in December 2018



Students have come from  
**12 DIFFERENT RURAL COUNTIES**



**10** new jobs generated → **~900 JOBS** on the Wasatch Front, using DWS metrics

impact on the rural counties = **~900 JOBS** on the Wasatch Front, using DWS metrics

*(based on an analysis completed by DWS about the impact of one job in different rural counties compared with one new job on the Wasatch Front)*



**NEW CERTIFICATION CLASSES EACH MONTH** in 2019

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## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Several economic development leaders are taking or have taken the course. Many have requested additional training in remote work.
- Although it often takes time to get people on board, enthusiasm and support have been extremely high from community members. The large majority of government leaders have been highly supportive.
- While there are abundant opportunities for part-time work, there are currently limited opportunities for full-time remote employment, including company connections with the Rural Economic Development Incentive (REDI) program.
- Class graduates are working as both remote workers and freelancers.
- Program evaluation and the collection of impacts are currently underway.



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## SUCCESS STORY

**ROI Program Gives Rural Utah Resident a Second Chance:** Everyone makes mistakes. The poet, Nikki Giovanni stated, “Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to the error that counts.” One young man, living in a tiny community in rural Utah, made some mistakes as a young man that required him to serve time in jail. After serving his time, he desired to find a good job and be a contributing member of society. He prepared a professional resume and sent out approximately 30 copies per week for several weeks with no success. He was unsuccessful getting interviews or obtaining a job from his remote location. He sought advice from others, and after visiting with someone from the Small Business Development Center, he learned about the Rural Online Initiative. He immediately enrolled in the certification course and registered with a recommended remote work site. Within 2 weeks, he had obtained part-time employment as a remote worker. He quickly impressed his employer with his skills and work habits and has now been moved to a full-time position, working from his home in rural Utah.

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## FUTURE PLANS

A new certification course, the “Master Remote Work Executive,” is being developed. This will allow organizations to train managers and leaders on how to create remote-work policies and supervise remote workers.