Rep. C. Albrecht

Request Name: Rural Online Initiative

Description: The Rural Online Initiative (ROI) is an innovative program designed to prepare Utah's rural workforce for the future of work. The program provides rural residents with specialized training and services for opportunities as remote employees, online freelancers, or e-commerce entrepreneurs. During the 2018 legislative session, the bill was unanimously passed by the House and Senate, then signed into law by Gov. Herbert. Funding was appropriated to USU Extension program development and delivery.

The ROI program is dedicated to making Utah's rural communities vibrant again. We can do this at scale by empowering rural citizens through remote work opportunities. Based on the success of this legislatively funded pilot program in 15 counties, we ask for ongoing funding for expansion to 21 counties.

Agency: Utah State University

Funding Amount: Education Fund - $879,932 – 2021 (Ongoing)

UtahStateUniversity

2019 - 2020

EXPANDING THE RURAL ONLINE INITIATIVE

RURAL ONLINE INITIATIVE

1 CURRENT SITUATION

The Rural Online Initiative (ROI) is an innovative program designed to prepare Utah's rural workforce for the future of work. The program provides rural residents with specialized training and services for opportunities as remote employees, online freelancers, or e-commerce entrepreneurs. During the 2018 legislative session, H.B. 327: Rural Online Initiative was sponsored by Rep. Michael Noel and Sen. David Hinkins and passed unanimously in the House and Senate. The bill was then signed into law by Governor Gary R. Herbert. Funding was appropriated to Utah State University Extension for program development and delivery across 15 targeted rural counties as a 3-year pilot program.

In its first 18 months, the ROI program certified over **1,000 participants** from rural Utah through its **Master Remote Work Professional** certificate course, of which ~70% had no prior remote work experience. Of those who were actively looking for work and had not yet been hired as a remote worker, 96% said they were confident in their ability to find remote work.

The ROI program is dedicated to making Utah's rural communities vibrant again. This innovative approach to economic development can scale by empowering rural citizens through remote work opportunities. Based on the success of this legislatively funded pilot program in 15 counties, we ask for ongoing funding for expansion to 21 counties (adding: Duchesne, Juab, Millard, Tooele, Box Elder, and Rich). Rural county commissioners must be able to count on the ROI program as they have included remote workforce development in their strategic economic development plans. In addition, our stakeholders that hire program participants need the assurance that they can continue hiring trained remote workers from rural Utah to take advantage of the Rural Economic Development Incentive (REDI) from HB110 in 2019.

The ROI program also supplies remote workers to the Rural Co-Working and Innovation Centers (RCIC) funded by HB296 and has not only proven the concept of connecting people in rural with remote jobs, but has made an impact on the lives of rural residents. The ROI program has put people to work, 82 remote jobs have been created which has the economic equivalency of 2,602 jobs on the Wasatch Front.

We do not need more time. ROI is ready to run, not walk.

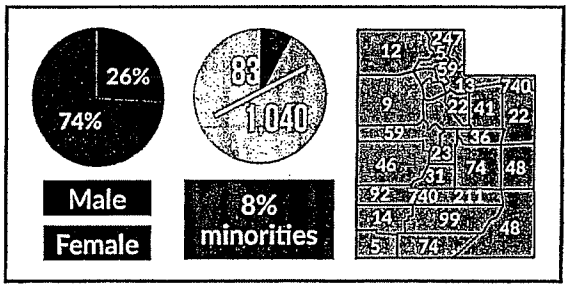
2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRAINING

Remote Work Town Halls

- **44** town hall meetings
- **738** participants
- **19** counties

Master Remote Work Professional Course

- **15** total cohorts
- **1,040** course participants
- **95** scholarships awarded
- **$21,375** in scholarships awarded



3 EXPANSION COSTS, CAPACITY, AND IMPACT

	SALARIES & FRINGE	OPERATING	TOTAL BUDGET	COUNTIES SERVED
Maintain Pilot Program	$ 613,385	$ 117,000	**$ 730,385**	15
Partial Statewide Expansion	$ 735,932	$ 144,000	**$ 879,932**	21

ROI Program Budget - with addition of Evaluation Specialist, Wasatch Front program coordinator, Career Dev. & entrepreneurship program coordinator, and covering entire state

	Ongoing	Program Totals
1. Payroll (Salaries & Fringe)	**$ 735,932**	$ 735,932
Extension Faculty - Advisor	$ 51,375	
Senior Program Coordinator	$ 132,109	
Senior Data Analyst	$ 86,728	
Project Coordinator II - Financial, Database, Web	$ 86,728	
Program Coordinator II - Southwest	$ 85,482	
Program Coordinator II - Southeast	$ 85,482	
Program Coordinator II - Southcentral	$ 85,482	
Program Coordinator II - Wasatch Front	$ 74,715	
Staff Assistant II	$ 47,832	
2. Staff Equipment	**$ 10,000**	$ 144,000
3. Travel	**$ 34,000**	
4. Supplies	**$ 13,000**	
5. Educational Meetings, Workshops	**$ 14,000**	
6. Marketing	**$ 24,000**	
7. Enterprise Software	**$ 20,000**	
8. Skill Scholarships	**$ 10,000**	
9. Research	**$ 9,000**	
10. Curriculum Development	**$ 10,000**	
	$ 879,932	$ 879,932