

Preparing Rural Americans for the Postpandemic Economy

LESSONS FROM UTAH



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Overview

Nationally, as of May 2022, the unemployment rate stood at 3.6 percent and labor force participation at 62.3 percent in what is being characterized as one of the tightest labor markets in history.¹ From May 2021 to May 2022, average hourly earnings increased 5.2 percent. However, the headline numbers only provide averages; looking below the averages shows the diversity of the US economy. Notably, rural communities face different labor market challenges than urban areas. The economic scope of activity is generally more limited in rural areas, and many have traditionally relied on industries such as agriculture, forestry, mining, and manufacturing² which have all accounted for decreasing shares of US jobs over time.³ In many rural communities, it is not uncommon to have one or two major industries or employers that primarily support the local economy.

The situation as the nation emerges from the pandemic, however, offers an opportunity for significant change. Rural areas are experiencing significant population growth as many people who live in more urban areas relocate to rural areas for a better lifestyle, and as the trend of shifting to remote work offers greater opportunities for people to choose where they live. Among growing industries, in the past, many rural counties have depended on tourism, but these jobs are often seasonal, do not pay well, and proved unsustainable during the pandemic. For rural America to prosper, it needs more stable, high-paying jobs that permit supporting a family. Not all these jobs will require a four-year college degree; instead, training opportunities can lead to successful careers.

On average, residents of rural communities have significantly lower college enrollment rates than those in urban and suburban areas, increasing the importance of skilling and reskilling rural residents for in-demand jobs.⁴ Many rural counties lack access to reliable, high-speed internet services for work, participation in training programs, and personal matters, such as engaging in telehealth.⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to expand access to education, health services, and work opportunities to individuals living in rural communities. In particular, it reaffirmed the importance of rural broadband access to take advantage of training and employment opportunities —without high quality internet services and devices, rural communities will be left behind in the postpandemic economy. Many individuals born in rural areas believe that they need to leave to be successful; this view must change through enhanced opportunities and resources within these regions.

This brief looks at labor market challenges and solutions for rural America, using rural Utah as a case study. In May 2022, the Committee for Economic Development, the public policy center of The Conference Board, in partnership with Ascendium, hosted a virtual roundtable co-chaired by CED Trustees Kevin Guest, Chairman and CEO of USANA Health Sciences, and Scott Pulsipher, President of Western Governors University, and moderated by CED President Dr. Lori Esposito Murray. The virtual roundtable brought together business leaders, elected and other government officials, economic development professionals, and representatives from higher education and training institutions to discuss the rural Utah labor market and focus on how to develop skills and training requirements for rural areas in Utah so that the rural workforce can prosper in the next economy. The objective of the CED

roundtable was to develop a summary of actionable recommendations for upskilling and training strategies for rural areas that would be applicable to rural areas across the nation. This initial roundtable in Utah is potentially the first in a series of similar roundtables in regions across the country with the objective of sharing and collating actionable solutions.

This brief reflects the challenges and successes shared by the roundtable participants. There is no single prescription for upskilling and revitalizing rural economies, as resources and situations vary from county to county. However, successful programs from rural Utah can serve as a model for other rural communities in the US as they are broadly applicable; goals of these programs include relying on skilling and reskilling to meet the needs of employers, diversifying the workforce and economy, and building mutually beneficial partnerships.

Virtual participants

CED Trustee Co-hosts:

- Kevin Guest, Chief Executive Officer & Chairman, USANA Health Sciences
- Scott Pulsipher, President, Western Governors University

Moderator:

- Dr. Lori Esposito Murray, President, Committee for Economic Development

Participants:

- Don E. Albrecht, Director, Western Rural Development Center, Utah State University
- Jane Barratt, Chief Advocacy Officer, MX
- Marc Christensen, former Chief Executive Officer, Chrysalis
- Vic Hockett, Director, Talent Ready Utah, State of Utah
- Jeffrey B. Jones, Summit County Office of Economic Development, Summit County
- Carrie Maynes, Chief Economist, Utah System of Higher Education
- Drew Shetrone, Senior Division Director, Supplemental Health Care
- US Representative Chris Stewart (UT-2)
- Juliette Tennert, Senior Advisor, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah
- Andy Theurer, Chief Executive Officer, ARUP Laboratories
- Kirstin Yeado, Program Officer, Ascendium Education Group
- Kelly Kidwell, Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Advisors
- Reece Kurtenbach, Chairman, President & CEO, Daktronics
- Camille Olson, Partner, Seyfarth Shaw LLP
- Paula Stern, Founder & President, The Stern Group

Insights for What's Ahead

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERCOMING RURAL WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Although each rural community faces unique challenges, there are some common solutions to strengthen rural workforces; these include promoting skills development, diversity, and economic prosperity.

- **Capitalize on training and upskilling opportunities.** States need to make training and upskilling programs available, and individuals living in rural communities need to capitalize on the opportunities. The programs must be flexible and accessible, such as offering opportunities to participate online and at times that are convenient for adults with childcare or employment responsibilities. They should allow individuals to opt into these programs on an “as can do” basis.
- **Increase access to education for traditionally underserved communities.** This includes first-generation college students and those from low-income households, minority groups, the military, and those in rural communities who can access courses and programs online.
- **Align educational programs with industry demand.** Educational institutions and other organizations providing training must work closely with businesses to ensure that students emerge from programs with relevant skills that are in demand. Preparing students with workforce-ready skills will help individuals find employment opportunities upon graduation, maximizing the return on investment into the programs.
- **Attract and retain a diverse workforce.** Expanding remote work opportunities will help diversify the economic opportunities available to residents of rural areas and allow individuals from diverse backgrounds greater flexibility to participate. Providing resource support to individuals looking to skill or upskill for better economic opportunity will also help diversify the workforce and help retain rural population.
- **Build strong public-private partnerships.** Public-private partnerships are key to achieving the goals outlined in these recommendations. Partnerships allow for pooling of resources, knowledge, and ideas. Organizations across the business community, the educational community, and government must come together to overcome the workforce challenges facing rural communities. And because each community faces unique issues, it takes local organizations to be active participants.
- **Ensure access to resources in rural communities that support workforce growth.** This includes providing reliable and affordable access to broadband and to quality health care.

Labor Market and Demographic Trends

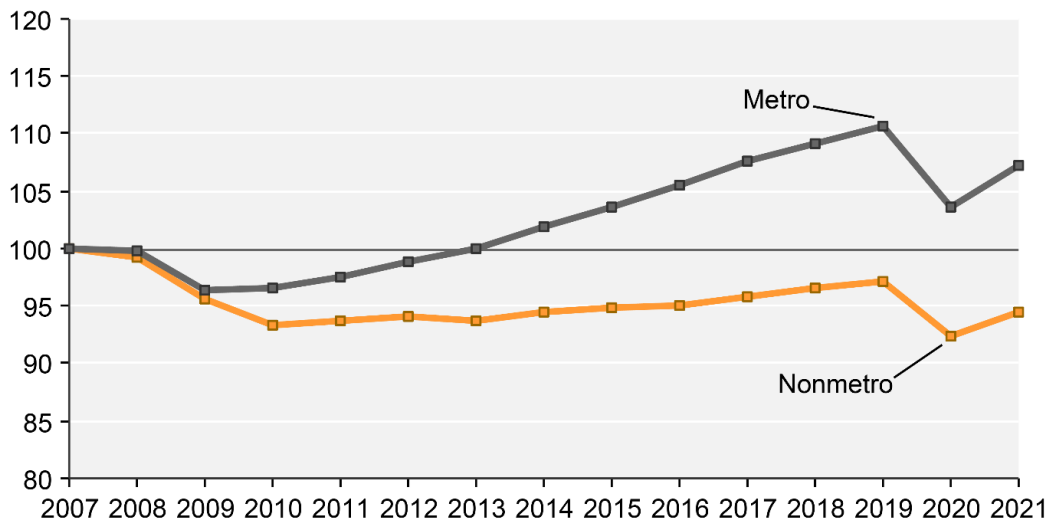
Labor market trends

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many rural communities had not fully recovered from the economic losses they suffered during the Great Recession between 2007 and 2009. In rural areas, the average labor force participation rate decreased 2.6 percentage points for working-age individuals (people ages 25 to 64) from 2007 to 2019, compared to a 0.7 percentage-point decline in urban areas.⁶ The larger decrease in rural labor force participation rates reflects the slower recovery in rural areas after the Great Recession and suggests that rural workers faced a choice between moving to urban areas to find work and remaining in rural areas where there were fewer jobs after the Great Recession.⁷ Rural counties lost population for the first time ever between 2010 and 2016.⁸

By the start of 2020, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, rural employment had recovered to only 97 percent of its 2007 level prior to the Great Recession, unlike employment in urban areas which had surpassed 2007 employment levels by 10 percent.⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic caused steep drops in employment in both rural and urban areas; by the end of 2021, employment levels remained below pre-COVID levels across the country.

U.S. employment in metro and nonmetro areas, 2007–21

Percent of 2007 employment (2007=100)



Note: Employment is based on annual average total employment by county; metro and nonmetro designations are based on the 2013 definition of metropolitan counties, as determined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics program (April 15, 2022 release).

In 2020, labor force participation rates in rural counties decreased the most compared to the previous year among workers ages 16 to 24. In the following year, the labor force participation rate for people ages 16 to 24 in rural counties rebounded compared to 2020 but remained down slightly for workers aged 25 to 64 and workers 65 and over.

Utah's economy

In Utah, the fastest growing industries include construction professional services the category of arts, entertainment, and recreation, and wholesale trade. The state currently faces two main challenges: how to find workers for companies in lower wage sectors and how to grow entrepreneurship further.

The state's labor market is tightening. Labor force participation has declined since 2017 in part due to the aging of the population, as is the case elsewhere in the US.¹⁰ Utah, though, also has a large younger population. In 2021, 71.6 percent of Utah's population was 18 years and older, the lowest of all the states,¹¹ in part because the state consistently has one of the highest birth rates in the nation.¹² Even so, Utah faces many of the same issues as the rest of the nation following the pandemic. Labor force participation in Utah was 67.8 percent (preliminary) in April 2022, down from series highs of over 73 percent in 1994.¹³ According to a roundtable representative from Utah, labor force participation of residents ages 16 to 19 has been declining over the past two decades but did rebound from the 2020 downturn. While this long-term trend shows that many young people are seeking higher education, which is good for the economy in the long term, it is pinching the labor pool of lower wage service workers.

In April 2022, the unemployment rate in Utah was 1.9 percent, tied with Nebraska for the lowest in the nation and the lowest ever recorded.¹⁴ The ideal rate of unemployment is a topic of debate, but generally when the unemployment rate gets very low, there are pressures to increase wages and benefits and fewer workers available to meet employers' needs. The increase in labor costs often gets passed to consumers, driving inflation.¹⁵ The extremely low unemployment rate in Utah makes filling jobs extremely difficult, and the Utah Economic Council cites the limited labor supply as one of the most pressing internal risks for the state for 2022.¹⁶

Still, the thriving Utah economy has not reached all its counties, as many rural counties are struggling. Counties that traditionally depended on forestry, mining, and agriculture need new opportunities to adapt to a changing economy. Because residents of rural communities are far less likely to have a college degree, this highlights the importance of training programs for rural residents to receive training for jobs in high demand.

Demographics

A challenge for many businesses located in rural regions is achieving a diverse workforce, as these regions, on average, have less diverse populations. Nationally, in 2018, whites accounted for 78.2 percent of the rural population compared to 57.3 of the urban population.¹⁷ By 2020, people of color accounted for 24 percent of the rural population, on average, and whites accounted for 76 percent.¹⁸ So, while rural areas have made progress in diversity, they still lag considerably behind urban areas.

Many rural areas have experienced population declines over the past decade as rural residents move to more populated areas to find greater economic opportunities.¹⁹ In Utah, several rural counties gained population, bucking this trend.²⁰ Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people who lived in more urban areas and had flexibility with remote working arrangements relocated to more rural areas for a slower paced lifestyle and to enjoy the amenities of living in areas with outdoor recreation, as Utah offers. Further, Utah's population is expected to continue to increase as net migration continues to grow.²¹ However, increases in population are only beneficial to supplementing the labor force if the rate of labor force participation is steady or rising. So even as the rural Utah population increases, the labor market will remain tight unless more rural residents are drawn into the labor market. Employers need to attract and skill workers for continued economic prosperity.

Critical Resources for US Workers

Broadband

It is especially critical that rural communities have high quality broadband access so they can connect with businesses located in other areas of the country to provide maximum opportunity for participation in the workforce across a wide range of industries and occupations. In these communities, it is more difficult to commute due to longer travel distances and fewer public transportation options. Limited access to reliable, high-speed internet services to work, train, and consult with doctors to receive health care is an issue faced by 35 percent of Americans living in rural and Tribal communities.²² The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of rural broadband access, as many activities moved online during heightened periods of social distancing. Recognizing this need, the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$65 billion toward the goal of making high-speed internet access available to and affordable for all Americans.²³

Health care

One particular industry of focus for all rural areas is health care. Building rural health care capacity, including a rural health care workforce, remains a common challenge throughout the US. The ability to provide residents with adequate health care is a necessary condition to build a strong rural workforce and economy. As Americans have increasingly concentrated in cities and suburbs, rural communities face growing difficulty attracting doctors, nurses, and allied professionals. Shifting these trends will require overcoming disparities not only in pay but also culture: with a medical training system heavily clustered around hospitals and universities in major cities, few are exposed to working in rural health as part of their education, which impacts their decisions when choosing where to practice.

There is enormous demand for health care workers across the country. The health care workforce has suffered since the onset of the pandemic and as of May 2022, the sector was still down over 200,000 jobs nationwide since February 2020. Job losses have been especially acute in nursing and residential care facilities and in hospitals. The pandemic was especially difficult for health care workers who saw increases in hours worked and who were forced to face the pandemic head on as essential personnel.

Rural areas were struggling to maintain health care facilities even before the pandemic. Between 2010 and 2020, over 100 rural hospitals closed, limiting care options for rural residents and eliminating a major employer in rural areas.²⁴ Prior to a closure, residents traveled an average of 3.4 miles to receive inpatient care—this distance ballooned to 23.9 miles after a closure.²⁵ In 2021, rural areas accounted for 61 percent of primary care health professional shortage areas, and only 12 percent of physicians practice in rural areas even though 20 percent of the US population resides in rural areas.²⁶

Some federal initiatives—such as loan repayments through the National Health Service Corps—aim to lower the barriers for new clinicians considering practicing in rural or underserved areas.²⁷ (Utah also runs a Health care Workforce Financial Assistance program to financially incentivize health care providers to practice in rural or underserved communities.²⁸)

In addition to financial incentives, efforts are needed to expose medical and nursing students to the advantages of rural work—for instance, the ability of primary-care physicians to treat a broader scope of cases, including those that would likely be referred to specialists in urban areas. Incentivizing rotational clinical training in rural areas is one way to increase exposure.²⁹ Local governments and health care institutions must collaborate with educational institutions to provide certificate programs and career ladders to provide growth pathways for lower paid medical professionals, such as nursing aides. Investing in these individuals' career development and offering higher wages will help with retention, as these positions are not often easy to fill; such measures will thus help address an expected 3.2 million national job deficit in health professions by 2025, including high-demand jobs such as nursing aides and medical laboratory scientists.

Putting Rural America to Work—What's Working in Utah Can Inform Other Rural Communities

While there is no single set of solutions to building up the diverse set of rural workforces that exist across the US, the similar challenges these communities face permit several important common approaches to addressing the issues. Here, Utah offers strong examples. The efforts of stakeholders across Utah to skill and reskill the local population, attract and retain talent, and work in concert across sectors has resulted in a dynamic set of successful initiatives and programs that can serve as a model for other rural communities.

Capitalize on training and upskilling opportunities

States need to make training and upskilling programs available, and individuals living in rural communities need to capitalize on the opportunities. The programs must be flexible and accessible, such as offering opportunities to participate online and at times that are convenient for adults with childcare or employment responsibilities and allowing individuals to opt into these programs on an “as can do” basis. The perception that training programs must be full time or in-person must be dispelled. Educational institutions and economic development organizations need to market the programs better to communicate the flexibilities so that residents are aware of the opportunities. Specific training programs on how to launch a company, how to do bookkeeping, and how to set up limited liability companies should be made

available to empower rural residents to support entrepreneurship and promote economic growth.

The Learn & Work in Utah program aims to train its rural residents with the skills needed to thrive in high-paying jobs. The Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development partnered with the Utah System of Higher Education to launch the program and has funded 1,100 seats to institutions serving rural populations, with programs ranging from short-term credentials to apprenticeships in high-demand fields such as automation, computer science, and engineering. The program strives to bring higher paying jobs to rural areas for both incumbent and displaced workers.³⁰ Courses are available in person, online, and in a hybrid format, making the programs accessible to everyone and allowing for flexibility for scheduling. The short-term upskilling opportunities encourage career development and workforce engagement and have been widely popular for both incumbent workers and those workers displaced by the pandemic. The program also matches students with employers seeking skilled workers. An extension of this program, the Return Utah program, offers opportunities for adults to refresh their skills and receive mentorship to re-enter the workforce after an extended absence.³¹

Utah State University works to provide the state's rural workforce and businesses with education, training, and services for opportunities in remote employment, freelance work, and e-commerce through the Rural Online Initiative.³² Created in 2018, the program was a "legislative response to increasing unemployment, intergenerational poverty, and net migration of young populations to urban centers."³³ Success stories on the program's website highlight participants' achievement of developing the skills and conduct needed for online work with the flexibility of remaining in their community and managing other responsibilities.

Align educational programs with industry demand

Beyond offering training and upskilling programs, educational institutions need to ensure that the programs offered provide students with skills that employers demand. Businesses must work with training institutions, community colleges, and trade schools to design curricula that produce workforce-ready graduates and, ideally, provide students with employment opportunities upon graduation. These programs should focus on teaching the skills needed for a specific occupation rather than covering a broader knowledge base as is typically required for a four-year degree. Where possible, employers should embrace hiring workers based on the skills they've learned and demonstrated rather than on degrees earned.

Apprenticeship programs use an "earn and learn" model and are highly effective at matching skills training with employer needs given the involvement of employers in the execution of the program and the on-the-job training received by the student.³⁴ Utah's Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection begins engaging students in high school and allows students to earn wages while completing their education,³⁵ using the hybrid Swiss model of apprenticeships. The program benefits employers by providing skilled labor that is tailored to their needs. Most innovative apprenticeship programs are in the expanding fields of computer science and health care.

Talent Ready Utah also runs the Utah Works program that provides short-term training for companies needing to hire employees quickly.³⁶ Program administrators work with industry

partners who design the program and select which courses and training are required to meet their workforce needs. The Utah System of Higher Education then provides training to fill these in-demand positions.

The Utah System of Higher Education is redesigning performance funding with the state legislature to help students access education and complete programs in a timely manner while meeting workforce demands.³⁷ Performance funding must be designed to motivate institutions to ensure these programs meet the needs of Utah's workforce. Learning institutions that apply for grant funding must prove both labor market need and an industry connection that will ultimately lead students to a high-quality job. Another idea is to require letters from employers showing that they would hire graduates of these programs.

Attract and retain a diverse workforce

As noted above, many rural communities have traditionally relied on agriculture, forestry, mining, and manufacturing for employment and economic opportunities. In other rural areas, tourism is the primary source of economic opportunity; often, tourism jobs are seasonal, lower paying, and do not require advanced skills. Expanding remote work opportunities has helped to diversify the economic opportunities available to residents of rural areas. Additionally, it has allowed those from diverse backgrounds greater flexibility to participate.

Providing support to individuals looking to skill or upskill for better economic opportunity will also help diversify the workforce and help retain population in rural areas. Residents not only need access to broadband but also access to devices to access online opportunities. The Go Utah program is currently building hubs for computer and internet access in rural communities to ensure that all residents can take part in online opportunities.³⁸ The state is utilizing community grant mechanisms to fund the initiative, including the Rural County Grant Program, which provides economic development grants for less populated Utah counties.³⁹

Not all jobs can be performed remotely, however. Another challenge to increasing job opportunities is affordable housing. The US is experiencing a housing boom, and the median sale price of houses sold in the US increased 33 percent since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, from \$322,600 in the second quarter of 2020 to \$428,7000 in the first quarter of 2022.⁴⁰ This trend of increased housing costs affects Utah as well. In some Utah counties, shortages of workers for lower-paid positions are exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing.⁴¹ Summit County recently purchased property to bring 1,100 beds to workforce housing sites to support workers in these industries.

The increase in nontraditional college students is also helping to diversify the workforce. Nontraditional college students include students that enter postsecondary school at an older age, attend part-time, have dependents, work full-time while enrolled, among other demographic, enrollment, and academic characteristics.⁴² The notion that college students are 18- to 24-year-old individuals can be a roadblock to older individuals interested in pursuing postsecondary opportunities. Educational institutions and employers need to normalize bringing in all types of individuals into learning and skilling opportunities. Students aged 25 and over account for nearly 40 percent postsecondary students.⁴³ Along with this trend, there has been huge growth in distance learning opportunities. Many employers no longer distinguish between online and resident learning programs; a survey revealed that 71

percent of C-suite executives said that an online credential is either generally equivalent or of higher quality when compared to one completed in-person.⁴⁴ The workforce is currently striving to deploy remote working opportunities so that potential employees do not need to relocate. However, the participation rate of these programs for those living paycheck to paycheck, even with pathways programs in place, has declined. Grants and “earn and learn” apprenticeship programs can help reduce the financial burden of entering and completing training programs.

It can also be difficult to reach people with disabilities in rural areas, as there are not as many programs and opportunities available to bring them into the workforce. The Utah Association of Community Services runs Utah Works, a nonprofit that discovers and facilitates work opportunities in both the public and private sector for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (this nonprofit organization is separate from the Talent Ready Utah Works program).

Build strong public-private partnerships

Building strong connections from business to rural communities is essential for rural job growth. Public-private partnerships are key to this effort. Partnerships allow for pooling of resources, knowledge, and ideas. Organizations in the business community, education, and government must come together to overcome the workforce challenges facing rural communities. And because each community faces unique issues, local organizations must be active participants. To build these strong connections to rural communities, businesses can work with educational institutions to better match curricula to employer demands. Governments can fund programs to help incentivize participation in reskilling or training programs. There are countless ways organizations can partner to strengthen rural workforce efforts.

Providing specific opportunities for workers is a concrete and effective way businesses can partner with educational institutions. Apprenticeships and offers of employment to individuals upon graduation in specific skills training programs can motivate workers to take on new training opportunities.

Companies in or near rural areas can partner with schools to begin meeting with students as early as middle school; fostering these relationships early is essential in encouraging and nurturing the next generation of the rural workforce. A company in Orem, Utah, traveled every month to a middle school in rural Price, 82.5 miles away, to connect with students regularly. A similar relationship exists between the Summit County economic development team and elementary and secondary school students in North Summit. Businesses should explore ways to connect with young people to nurture their skills and provide a career development ladder.

Conclusion

While there is no single solution to overcoming rural workforce challenges, there are common themes and examples to follow. Partnerships are key to providing opportunities for individuals to grow their skill set through their lifetimes to match employers' changing needs. Businesses can work with educational providers to ensure that students are learning skills that are in-demand and that graduates are workforce ready.

Communities can strive to provide the resources that rural residents need to actively participate in the workforce and live in rural communities. Access to broadband and quality health care are critical.

Utah's strong efforts to promote its rural workforce can serve as an example for states as they work to strengthen their own rural communities.

¹ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, [The Employment Situation—May 2022](#). See also, Agron Nicaj, "[Employment Report Shows Another Month of Solid Job Growth](#)," The Conference Board, June 3, 2022.

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³ According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics [Current Population Survey](#), agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting accounted for 13 percent of total US employment in the late 1940s. By 1960, the share had shrunk to 8 percent. In 2021, these industries accounted for just 1.5 percent of US employment. Manufacturing and mining data were first available in 1983 where they accounted for 18.6 percent and 0.8 percent of all employment compared to 9.6 percent and 0.4 percent in 2021.

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¹¹ US Census Bureau, [State Population by Characteristics: 2020-2021](#).

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¹⁶ Juliette Tennert, Economic Outlook—Utah, included in [“2022 Economic Report to the Governor,”](#) Utah Economic Council, 2022.

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²⁰ Utah Economic Council, [“2022 Economic Report to the Governor,”](#) Figure 1.2: Absolute and Percentage Changes in County Population, 2010-2020.

²¹ The University of Utah Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, [“Utah Population to Increase by 2.2 Million People Through 2060,”](#) January 19, 2022.

²² The White House, [“Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Rural Playbook,”](#) last updated April 2022.

²³ Department of Commerce, [“FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration’s ‘Internet for All’ Initiative: Bringing Affordable, Reliable High-Speed Internet to Everyone in America,”](#) Office of Public Affairs, May 13, 2022.

²⁴ National Institute for Health Care Management (NIHCM), [“Rural Health During the Pandemic: Challenges and Solutions to Accessing Care,”](#) Infographic, February 24, 2022.

²⁵ NIHCM, [“Rural Health During the Pandemic: Challenges and Solutions to Accessing Care,”](#) February 24, 2022.

²⁶ NIHCM, [“Rural Health During the Pandemic: Challenges and Solutions to Accessing Care,”](#) February 24, 2022.

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³⁰ [Learn & Work in Utah](#)

³¹ [Return Utah](#)

³² Utah State University, [Quick Guide to Extension Impacts: Finance.](#)

³³ Utah State University, [Quick Guide to Extension Impacts: Finance.](#)

³⁴ Department of Labor, [Apprenticeship.gov.](#)

³⁵ Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity, [Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection.](#)

³⁶ Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity, [Utah Works.](#)

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SUSTAINING CAPITALISM

Achieving prosperity for all Americans could not be more urgent. Although the United States remains the most prosperous nation on earth, millions of our citizens are losing faith in the American dream of upward mobility, and in American-style capitalism itself. This crisis of confidence has widened the divide afflicting American politics and cries out for reasoned solutions in the nation’s interest to provide prosperity for all Americans and make capitalism sustainable for generations to come. In 1942, the founders of the Committee for Economic Development (CED), our nation’s leading CEOs, took on the immense challenge of creating a rules-based postwar economic order. Their leadership and selfless efforts helped give the United States and the world the Marshall Plan, the Bretton Woods Agreement, and the Employment Act of 1946. The challenges to our economic principles and democratic institutions now are equally important. So, in the spirit of its founding, CED, the public policy center of The Conference Board, releases a series of CED Solutions Briefs throughout the year. These briefs address today’s critical issues, including health care, the future of work, education, technology and innovation, regulation, US global competitiveness, trade, infrastructure, inequality, climate, energy and the environment, and taxation.

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