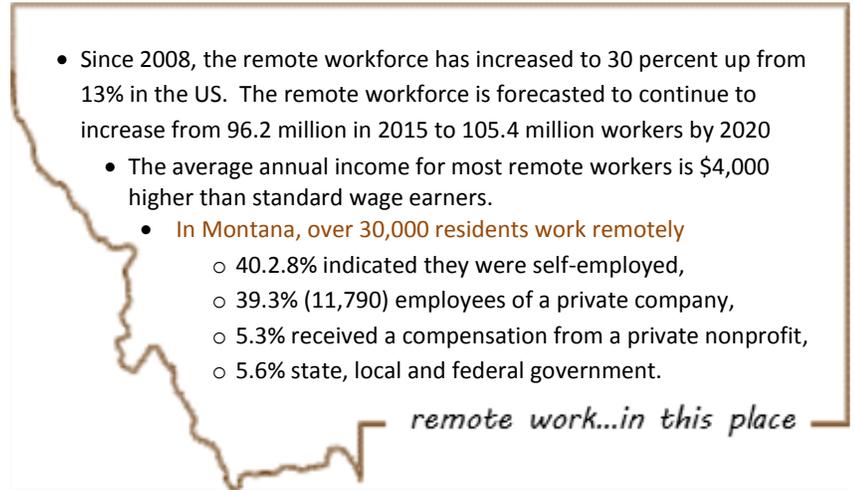


ADVANCING REMOTE WORK IN MONTANA

The Nature of Work is Changing – We are moving from a centralized location to more decentralized (often home-based) structures. As this new geography of workplace emerges, its impact on local economics will continue to grow and change our expectations about the infrastructure that supports our local communities. It's time to consider new economic development strategies that benefit workers, businesses, and communities, especially the rural communities of Montana. In April 2018, deeper conversation began among business and economic development leaders from across the state about the value that remote and/or telework adds to our economy.

Our Mission: We are a grassroots group who want to advance the vision and economic value of remote work for Montana's rural communities.



The Opportunity: Decentralizing work brings skills, talent and revenue to the communities that are home to the workers. Remote work can be entrepreneur or freelance work; cyber or telecommuting W-2 work; 1099 work; consulting; or any other work that can be facilitated at home or in a shared space using a mobile or remote platform. An ever-increasing number of jobs can be performed from home or a mobile platform – enabling remote work possible for nearly every sector of industry. The scope and range of goods and services that can be produced or exported is almost unlimited. Within the next decade, the number of remote workers is projected to be half the workforce^{1,2} **Competition for top talent is fierce and will continue to grow globally in the coming years.**^{3,4} Montana businesses risk losing top talent to other locations.

Now is the Time: Montana must consider new tactics that will give our workers, businesses, and small rural communities a competitive advantage. If we fail to embrace the policies and infrastructure necessary for 21st century success, Montana's economic outlook in rural communities will continue to decline. Montana's communities and industry can partner to reach remote workforce enhancement goals and create novel strategies to advance the knowledge economy in Montana. Consider:

- Opportunities to create novel incentives to encourage remote workers to come to Montana and for Montana job creators to look for needed skills among rural Montana communities using remote work platforms.
- Focus on defining where infrastructure investment is still needed and raise awareness and funds to support communities that suffer from connectivity isolation.
- Help communities establish an electronic footprint by creating web-platform templates, a collaborative web portal and unified messaging campaign to enable remote work for Montana.
- Communicate with Montanans the positive transformative power of growing the remote workforce, developing skills in rural communities, increasing skill and talent accessibility and holding up the benefits of growing the knowledge economy in Montana.
- Market to out-of-state knowledge workers to consider small town, rural Montana as their place of work and residence.

Montana Remote & Telework Partners includes people working remotely, regional, state and federal agencies, non-profit economic development & business entities and individuals from across Montana. We invite your ideas and new partnerships. Connect with us by emailing montanatelecommuterpartners@gmail.com

¹ IDC International Data Corporation

² per estimates by US Census Bureau (2016)

³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/12/predictions-for-freelance-work-education/>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/us/remote-workers-work-from-home.html?register=email&auth=register-email>