

**MEDA WORKING GROUP**  
**Advancing REMOTE WORK in Montana**

Thursday, June 4, 11:15am Zoom Meeting

**Participants:** Anne Boothe, Chair; Chris Manos, Barbara Stiffarm, Abby Majerus, Lance Robbins, Lisa Haas, Brenda Schilling, Todd O’Hair, Sarah Schmitt-Wilson, Tami Burke, LeAnn, Juliann Snediger, Elisa Fiaschetti, Paul Tuss, Geoff Feiss, Sarah Calhoun, Ken Fichtler, Erin Lutts, Shandy Moran, Liz Moore, Kelcie Bates, Karl Unterschuetz, Diane Smith, Tina Oliphant, Soren Chargois, Anne Pichette, Harold Heppner, and Gloria O’Rourke

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**[Recording of the Meeting](#)**

**Welcome**

Anne Boothe, Working Group Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting

1. **Welcome/introductions.** Anne reviewed and shared slides (inserted after these notes) taken from the [“white paper”](#).

2. **Follow-up/Action Items**

- a. Policy Issues related to remote work/broadband issues – Erin Lutts, MidRivers Communications and Anne Boothe, shared information based on the slides below as well as those posted on the MEDA Remote Worker Working Group website. [See resources here.](#)
- b. [Make Montana Home](#) – Todd O’Hair, CEO and President of the Montana Chamber of Commerce. Todd shared that his staff does not have the bandwidth to continue working on this project and is looking for a new home for the site.

Russ said it would be a great fit for MATR to take it over. Russ and Todd will meet to further discuss. Russ has a project called “Come Home Montana” that is very similar. This project may also have a fit with MEDA’s Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools study.

Anne spoke with Tara Rice about attaching information to existing marketing campaigns reflecting the opportunity for remote work in Montana. This will be considered once COVID-19 issues are reduced.

- c. Marketing Flyer/press release to encourage remote work in Montana – Anne & Tina Oliphant. [Make Choteau Home](#) (rural attraction example) Tina shared this project is still in the works. Sarah Schmitt-Wilson offered to help Anne and Tina with this project. The idea is to create a unified campaign to attract remote workers to Montana.

Sarah Calhoun noted the best sell is a high quality of life and low cost of living.

3. **New Opportunities**

- a. Sarah Schmitt-Wilson Ph.D., MSU - coauthor of [Young, Education and Choosing Rural](#) – shared insights and advice from her experience. The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).
- b. Russ Fletcher, MATR – [The Telecommuting & Gig Workforce in Montana](#) Attracting newly liberated workers is the short term goal. Attracting remote workers, helping Montana workers find remote work and helping Montana companies attract employees are the long term goals. Russ shared an

overview of topics related to promoting/attracting remote work across Montana:

1. Develop and outreach program with Montana high school and university alumni associations, Montana Ambassadors, and other nation-wide organizations that have Montana ties. Develop marketing program to encourage Montana to invite those who have been born here, went to school or have an interest in living here to Come Home.
2. Develop and distribute a marketing guide for Montana communities so they can best publicize the benefits of living in their community. Include social and technical aspects with a focus on broad band, housing availability, distance to nearest airport, social connectivity, and social and recreational strengths. Include contact info for several residents including recent newcomers so interested parties can contact them and open a dialogue.
3. Work with Montana businesses and organizations interested in attracting new employees.
4. Help state of Montana develop marketing campaign - Come Home Montana. Single site where all community information, Montana companies and testimonials and information is available.

c. [Rural Online Initiative](#) –we will invite Idaho group to present at our next Zoom.

4. **More – next steps/actions; next meeting**

- a. Update from Paul Tuss on potential EDA funding for this effort.
- b. Invite Rural Online Initiative (Idaho group) to present next meeting
- c. Update on action items, i.e., marketing campaign for remote workers in MT
- d. Update on NextGen of Economic Development Tools project



## Advancing Remote Work in Montana



# IN MONTANA

Over 30,000 residents work remotely. Of those:

54.55% say they are self employed.

57.99% were employees of a private company.

6.67% received compensation from a private nonprofit.

4.72% worked for state, local or federal government.

(note: data is pre COVID-19)



## THE OPPORTUNITY

Retain and attract top skills and talent for new and existing Montana companies, including growing Tech Industry.

Home or shared spaces enables remote work for nearly every sector of industry with disbursement across Montana (urban and rural.)

Rural Brain Gain – [Rural Online Initiative \(ROI\)](#) (increase incomes, provide education/retrain local talent, job creation, strengthen local tax base)

Build the case for improved broadband across the state of Montana.

Employers are engaged - with a host of available resources including MTDLI [Remote Workforce Toolkit](#), Mt High Tech [Remote Work Security](#)

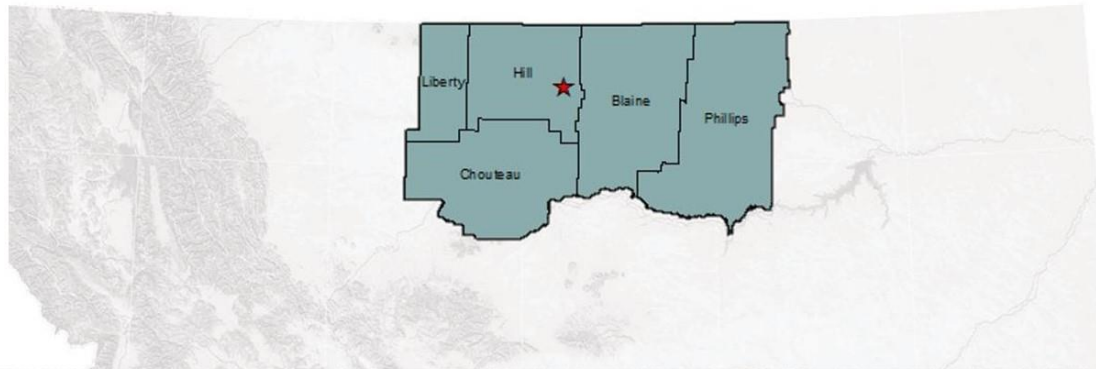


Opportunities for policy development for improved broadband and IT infrastructure and affordability (NexGeneration Program inclusion)

Momentum in response to COVID-19 (“silver thread in the pandemic”)

Defining the new economy.

Ongoing involvement in REMOTE WORK MEDA Working Group



**REMOTE WORK... IN THIS PLACE**



