

**For Immediate Release**

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**Utah Coal Country Strike Team continues to serve as a national model to help coal communities**  
*Schmidt Futures awards another quarter million dollars to help diversify the economy in Carbon and Emery counties*

**March 2, 2021 (Salt Lake City)** – The Utah Coal Country Strike Team will invest another \$251,185 in nine projects that support small businesses, affordable housing, tourism infrastructure, and student scholarships in Carbon and Emery Counties, awarded by Schmidt Futures. This new investment, which is levered with an over four-to-one match, will help diversify the economy in Utah’s coal country and help residents achieve a more economically stable future. Today’s announcement brings the total amount invested by the locally led Strike Team to \$1.3 million, all at a time when the Strike Team has met their goal to secure a 10% increase in incomes for residents of the region.

“Despite the challenges we face, Carbon and Emery counties have significant potential for future economic success,” said Geri Gamber, director of the Southeastern Utah Association of Local Governments, which leads the Strike Team. “This additional funding from Schmidt Futures will help us fulfill that potential and invest in new opportunities for *all* Utahns living in the region.”

The Strike Team, which was a finalist in 2019 national competition sponsored by Schmidt Futures to raise incomes for America’s middle class, pursues a four-fold strategy, including workforce training, housing revitalization, tourism infrastructure, and economic development incentives. The effort serves as a national model for how a public university can organize a multi-disciplinary, data-driven, and mission-focused “Strike Team” to help coal-dependent communities struggling in a dynamic energy environment shifting away from fossil fuels.

“Utah’s Coal Country is a lot like the other 150 coal communities scattered around the country,” said Mayor Mike Kourianos, mayor of Price City, the economic center of Utah’s coal region. “We have a vision to diversify and invest in a bright future for our children and grandchildren. As we do so we value partnerships like we have with Schmidt Futures and the University of Utah to help us create a more well-rounded economy moving forward.”

The Strike Team assesses its success through a custom-built and rigorous model that measures income gains in Utah’s Coal Country compared to that of other coal communities in the United States. Using a synthetic control approach, the model compares actual income in Utah’s coal country on a quarterly basis to the trend incomes in 150 benchmark coal communities. The model helps investors see whether their investments achieve desired outcomes. In the first quarter of 2020, the Utah Coal Country Strike team met its goal to raise incomes by 10%.

“Public universities like the University of Utah embrace a service mission to help our states prosper,” said Natalie Gochnour, Director of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah, the research sponsor of this

work. “We recognize the economic hardship faced right now by the very people and communities that helped build the Utah economy. As public policy leaders we share our expertise with a locally led effort, and in doing so, provide a national example of how universities can serve.”

The new funding supports nine projects and investments:

- **Silicon Slopes East Co-working Spaces** - Supports the creation of two co-working spaces, one in Carbon County and one in Emery County, for remote workers and local entrepreneurship.
- **Coal Country Scholarship** - Provide scholarships for students at Utah State University Eastern for training and re-training in needed fields.
- **Culinary Entrepreneurship Commercial Kitchen Incubator for Tourism** - Remodel an existing kitchen at the Business Technical & Assistance Center to meet commercial standards and serve as an incubator for local food entrepreneurs.
- **Small Business Global Marketing**: Assist small businesses in the region develop new global markets and revenue streams.
- **Business Outreach**: Further digital infrastructure efforts by the Carbon County Chamber of Commerce to organize and unite the local business community as the economy diversifies.
- **Ground-Up Housing Construction Program**: Support the Ground-Up Construction program, which works with local contractors to provide land and materials to build a brand-new home for participants who contribute with sweat equity.
- **Tourism Infrastructure Improvements for the Green River** - Assist with Green River City’s tourism infrastructure project including river access, interpretive signs, an ADA accessible ramp, and a watercraft launch site.
- **Tourism Infrastructure Improvements for the Price River** – Support Helper City’s Price River restoration project to allow for additional tourism and a launching point to the city’s center.
- **Main Street Revitalization** - Support the façade improvement program on Main Street to improve tourism infrastructure in Price City.

The investment in these projects is matched by \$1.14 million in secured matching grants from the Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Utah State University Eastern, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S Economic Development Administration, Carbon County, Emery County, City of Green River, Utah Department of Wildlife Resources, Helper City, and Price City.

The Utah Coal Country Strike Team expresses appreciation to all of our funding partners. For more information about the Strike Team, visit [coalstriketeam.com](http://coalstriketeam.com).

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