

New Supply Chain Database Launched to Aid Utah Businesses

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A new online database, known as CONNEX™ UTAH, was recently launched to help potential customers connect with Utah manufacturers with operations of all sizes and for companies to connect and grow their businesses. The database is also an important step in helping companies and governments navigate disruptions that can ripple through supply chains — as most people have experienced in the past year — hindering companies' abilities to produce goods and services and impacting consumers.

Utah State University partnered with the Utah Industry Resources Alliance (UIRA) and the State of Utah to create the new online tool that was developed over several years. Work on the project accelerated last year, pushed by the need to quickly identify potential critical COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) producers in the state.

Early in the pandemic, the UIRA worked diligently to find companies that could produce face masks, gowns, and face shields. Stephen Reed, director of USU's Utah Manufacturing Extension Service, said during the early days of the pandemic, it was all-hands-on-deck.

"Members of the UIRA were collaborating to identify anyone who had the capabilities to produce COVID-19-related PPE, such as face masks, face shields, sanitizers, and other critical items," he said. "This effort very much relied on the 'historical knowledge' of the UIRA members to find people working in cut-and-sew operations."

With the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds identified, USU and the UIRA approached the legislature for funding to support onboarding all Utah manufacturers into the CONNEX UTAH platform and identifying critical PPE suppliers in the state. USU is leading this effort in conjunction with the UIRA partners to expand the effort to identify manufacturers of all kinds. Organizers are using a call center to connect with every manufacturer in Utah, and new companies are being added to the CONNEX UTAH database every day at no cost to the company.

"This is the most unique and powerful supply chain tool out there," Reed said. "It not only has the ability to search for companies by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) or Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, but users can search for companies by production process capability, equipment, materials, certifications, and regions of the state. CONNEX UTAH is a real game-changer that will help Utah companies expand into the marketplace."

Platform users can also look for posted RFI/RFP/RFQ opportunities collected in the CONNEX UTAH Exchange Center. The Exchange Center connects producers and consumers to support its primary goal of helping Utah manufacturers grow their business and thrive.

Find the link to CONNEX UTAH at the Utah Industry Resource Alliance website, utahira.org then click on the CONNEX UTAH tab at the top of the page. Manufacturers can also contact support@utahira.org to request an account.

CONNEX UTAH also operates with the Manufacturers Marketplace website developed by the National Association of Manufacturers and the COVID-19 Response Tool which is also available at no cost during the pandemic to help streamline critical connections within the supply chain.

The COVID-19 Response Tool is accessible both locally and nationally and is searchable by government and industry to efficiently link manufacturers/suppliers and organizations seeking to purchase much-needed materials and products, such as PPE, medical devices, and components. Suppliers are being added daily to that directory as well. To access the COVID-19 Response Tool, visit COVID-19.ManufacturersMarketplace.US.

About Utah Industry Resource Alliance (UIRA)

The Utah Industry Resource Alliance is the premier source for assessing needs and providing solutions available through public and private resources. UIRA is part of the

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) based at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, with professionals living and working in communities across the state. The primary focus is to help Utah's manufacturers thrive.

The MEP alliance pools the collective expertise of the following: USU's Utah Manufacturing Extension Service and the Manufacturing/Outdoor Products Support Hub; Impact Utah; the University of Utah Manufacturing Extension Partnership; the World Trade Center Utah; the Utah Manufacturers Association, the Utah Advanced Materials & Manufacturing Initiative; and the Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA). This powerful team provides access to manufacturing specialists, application engineers and research professionals from the top organizations and universities in the state.

For more information about UIRA, email info@utahira.org.

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