KEM C. GARDNER POLICY INSTITUTE

2025 REPORT *to the* COMMUNITY

Kem C. Gardner POLICY INSTITUTE
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
DAVID ECCLES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

10 YEARS OF IMPACT 2015-2025

10 Years of In

Vision

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute is Utah's pre-eminent public policy institute and a vital gathering place for policy leadership and thoughtful discourse that helps our community prosper.

We also support our institutional home, the David Eccles School of Business, in achieving its vision to become the business school of the Mountain West and a national leader. We partner with the College of Social and Behavioral Science in inspiring human solutions to life's challenges.

Mission

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute develops and shares economic, demographic and public policy data and research that sheds light and helps people make INFORMED DECISIONS™.

We also assist the David Eccles School of Business prepare students with knowledge, integrity, and an entrepreneurial mindset to create meaningful impact on business and society, as well as innovate through transformative research.

Committable Core Values

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute subscribes to five committable core values. We reflect these internal values externally in the products and services we provide to the community. Taken together, these values define who we are, how we conduct ourselves, and what comprises our work culture.

1. Responsibility to the community
2. Research integrity and relevance
3. Accountability
4. Collaboration
5. Positive and passionate

Impact

Over the past decade, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute has become Utah's premier economic and public policy research institute.

Through informed research, insightful analysis, and meaningful community engagement, the Gardner Institute has established itself as a vital resource for policymakers, business leaders, and residents across the state. As we commemorate this milestone, we look forward to the next 10 years of continued service and innovation, further supporting the University of Utah's goal of generating unsurpassed societal impact and fostering a stronger, more prosperous Utah for generations to come.

Inside

A Message from President Taylor Randall

Dear Friends,

At the University of Utah, we measure our success by the impact we create. Our Impact 2030 strategic plan calls on us to generate unsurpassed societal impact—an ambition that requires trusted data, rigorous analysis, forums for sharing ideas, and a dedication to serving our communities. For the past decade, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute has been indispensable to that effort.

The Gardner Institute has become the state's preeminent resource for economic, demographic, and policy insights. Its work equips decision-makers with the clarity and confidence to make choices that strengthen Utah's communities and economy. From long-term population projections that inform state planning, to timely and relevant information about the health of the Great Salt Lake, to urgent guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the institute's research demonstrates how vital data can shape lives, policies, and opportunities.

The Gardner Institute's commitment to sharing actionable insights with the public establishes it as an embassy of thought leadership for the University of Utah. In the historic Thomas S. Monson Center, state leaders, business executives, scholars, and community advocates gather to collaborate on Utah's most pressing issues. Our Presidential Impact Scholars spend hours at the institute sharing insights and knowledge and engaging with community leaders. The Gardner Institute's role as a trusted forum reflects the university's broader mission: to bring people together, elevate thoughtful discussion, and advance solutions that benefit all 3.5 million Utahns.

As we celebrate ten years of impact, I express my gratitude to the Gardner Institute's talented team, its advisory board, and the many community partners who make its work possible. Together, you have shown what it means to unite insights with action. I look forward to many more years of the Gardner Institute lighting Utah's path and supporting the university's mission to deliver unsurpassed societal impact.

With great appreciation,

Taylor Randall
President, University of Utah

A Message from Our Dean and Director

Dear Friends,

A national columnist once summed up the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute by saying, "You are in the lighting business, not the heating business." He recognized intuitively and correctly that the Gardner Institute ***sheds light, not heat***, on many of the most important issues and trends facing Utah.

This year, we celebrate ***ten years of light*** as we commemorate a decade of service to Utah. We love the light metaphor as a symbol of the Gardner Institute. Our data ***lights the way*** for decision-makers so they can make INFORMED DECISIONS™.

The light comparison works in other ways. We ***lead with light*** by serving our community. In keeping with the guidance of our university, we seek to create unsurpassed societal impact. We provide ***gradients of light*** with our fact sheets, insights, research briefs, reports, social media posts, presentations, media interviews, events and more. Each gradient ***brightens*** Utah and helps keep the state prosperous. And importantly, we help make public policy transparent by subjecting choices to the ***light of day*** for all to see.

This light would not be possible without the brilliance of our dedicated and talented staff, the unwavering support from Utah's flagship university and top-ranked business school, the dozens of committed community partners, and the backing of a prominent advisory board. Thank you for helping to build Utah's premier public policy institute.

And no acknowledgement would be complete without recognizing Kem and Carolyn Gardner for their generous support.

As we begin another decade of Illumination, we will continue to be responsible to the community we serve as we prepare independent, relevant, meaningful, and understandable research for the betterment of Utah.

Thanks for your support!

Kurt Dirks, Dean
David Eccles School of Business

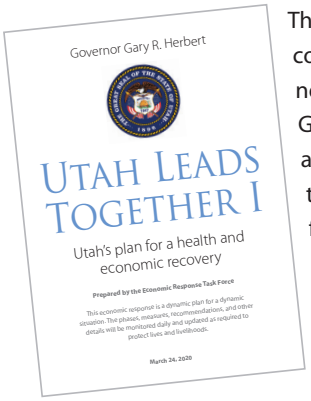
Natalie Gochnour, Associate Dean and Director
Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Points of Light

Over the last 10 years, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute dedicated itself to shedding light on the most important issues impacting Utahns. Our work established the Institute as a vital source of research and thought leadership that helps community leaders and policymakers make informed decisions. We are pleased to share 10 research endeavors, which we call "Points of Light," to highlight the Gardner Institute's commitment to serving Utah.

COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic presented Utah and the world with an unprecedented crisis. As policymakers grappled with the health and economic fallout, the Gardner Institute provided critical data and analysis to help guide the state's response.



The Utah Leads Together series became a cornerstone of this effort. Recognizing the need for dynamic, data-informed plans, the Gardner Institute worked closely with state and business leaders to create a framework to understand the crisis and chart a path forward. These plans provided clarity and context, offering measurable goals and objectives to track progress in managing the pandemic's impact on both public health and the economy.

The Institute's work also delved into the pandemic's effect on Utahns, from demographic impacts on death rates to addressing the need for childcare during the pandemic. The Institute also provided an analysis of the learning loss suffered by Utah students to assess the impact of the pandemic on education.

The Gardner Institute's commitment to providing timely, relevant data played a vital role in informing Utah's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This important work both safeguarded the state's economic future and contributed to the well-being of all Utahns during a time of extraordinary challenges.

Utah's Long-Term Economic and Demographic Projections

The Gardner Institute provides economic and demographic decision support to the State of Utah, which includes long-term planning projections.

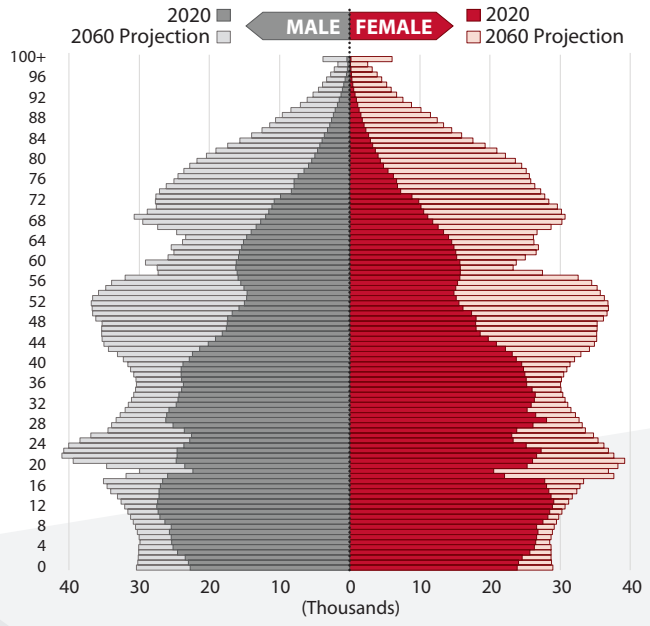
The Gardner Institute produces long-term projections to inform decision-making at the state and county levels and offer vital insights into likely transformations of Utah's population in the coming decades. Informed by local data and estimates produced by the Utah Population Committee, this work showcases how a locally produced model can respond to the unique needs of the state.

Recent projections indicate continued population growth into the future, accompanied by increases in the number of households. Net migration will be a strong driver of population growth. That said, the experiences of population change vary throughout the state, with differing impacts of net migration primarily driven by economic changes.

Economically, the data indicate continued growth and diversification of Utah's economy. Projections anticipate industries such as construction, professional services, and health care will influence this change.

The long-term planning projections, revisited on a four-year cycle, will soon enter their third iteration under the Gardner Institute with publication anticipated in fall 2025. Each new version builds on the decades of research that came before, with innovations in modeling, data inputs, and economic context.

Utah Population Pyramid: 2020 and 2060



Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, 2020–2060 Projections

The New Utah

At the dawn of the 21st century, Utah leaders placed a time capsule below the front steps of the Utah State Capitol. The historic cache included a leather-bound book with letters to the future from 124 executive, legislative, and judicial branch leaders.

Former Governor Mike Leavitt's opening letter memorialized the solemn responsibility of Utah leaders to serve as "keepers of the flame". The flame symbolizes all that is great about Utah and the light it shares with the world.

As keepers of the flame, Utahns entrust those in public service with the responsibility to keep Utah strong and flourishing. It is in this spirit that the Gardner Institute published the monograph "The New Utah: Keepers of the Flame," which presents evidence and shares ideas on what leaders can do today to keep Utah's flame burning bright long into the future.

Once a small state with primarily internal growth, Utah is now a mid-sized state driven by external migration. This influx of new residents contributes to a more multicultural society. The state's fertility rate has dropped below replacement levels, leading to an older population that demands different services and infrastructure.

Utah's economy is now elite, consistently outperforming other states. However, this success is threatened by soaring housing costs, which pose a major economic risk and hinder upward mobility for many Utahns. Affordable housing is critical to maintaining Utah's strong middle class and preserving and attracting a skilled workforce.

Six significant transitions of the New Utah

OLD UTAH	NEW UTAH
Small State	**More Populous, Mid-Sized State**
Population rank **34th** (2000, 2010)	Population rank **30th** (2020)
Internal Growth	**External Growth**
34% of growth from migration (2000-2020)	***(and Much Lower Fertility)*** **61%** of growth from migration (2021 and 2022). Utah **fertility below replacement** level since 2018
Young	**Older**
9.1% age 65+ (2010)	**20%** age 65+ (2050)
Less Multicultural	**More Multicultural**
9.5% racial/ethnic minority (1990)	**23.3%** racial/ethnic minority (2022) *(30+% in 2040)*
Strong Economy	**Elite Economy**
Utah **job growth strong**, but **ebbs and flows**	Utah **job growth consistently best in nation** and **top COVID outcomes**
Affordable Housing	**Unaffordable Housing**
Utah **housing costs** to **wages highly competitive**	Utah **housing costs** represent **major economic risk**

Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

To navigate these challenges, the monograph urges Utah leaders to adopt a proactive approach: keep an open mind, listen to all voices, invest strategically, strengthen institutions, and promote unity.

Data Book: Utah Demographic Characteristics

Utah possesses a distinctive blend of youthfulness, increasing diversity, and evolving religious traditions. As part of its role as the state's lead resource for population data, the Gardner Institute produced a data book detailing these demographic characteristics.

While still the youngest state, Utah continues to age, with projections estimating that over 20% of the population will be of retirement age by 2060. Racial and ethnic diversity is also on the rise; nearly 25% of Utahns identify as a minority, enriching the state's cultural landscape. The state tallies the largest share of religious adherents in the nation.

These demographic shifts present both opportunities and challenges. Data reveal significant disparities in economic, educational, health, and housing outcomes based on age, disability, ethnicity, and location. For instance, minorities often face lower incomes and higher poverty rates than their White counterparts, while women can experience income gaps despite higher educational attainment.

Understanding these trends supports informed decision-making. These data help stakeholders anticipate future needs related to education, health care, housing, transportation, and more. Decision-makers can use these data to address disparities as appropriate, and tailor policies to reflect the state's evolving demographics, creating a prosperous future for *all* Utahns.

> *"Be present…proximity is incredibly important… especially with people of different cultures, different backgrounds, different ideologies."*
>
> – Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson on navigating the growth of our state

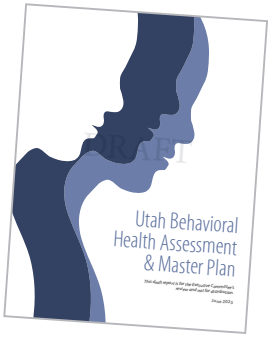
Utah Behavioral Health Assessment & Master Plan

People with better behavioral health are physically healthier, happier, and more productive—positively impacting communities, safety, and the economy.

Utah developed a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving people's behavioral health by enhancing equitable access to behavioral health services, eliminating gaps, and implementing system changes to drive outcomes.

To accomplish these objectives, the Utah Behavioral Health Coalition came together to assess the state's current systems of behavioral health services and supports and develop a plan for improvement.

The Utah Behavioral Health Assessment & Master Plan embodies a comprehensive initiative designed to improve access and effectiveness in mental health and substance use disorder systems. The plan, spearheaded by the Utah Hospital Association (UHA) and the Utah Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), serves as a guide for private and public sectors to create a more aligned and efficient system.



The Gardner Institute played a vital role in this effort, conducting an extensive environmental scan to assess needs, gaps, and challenges within Utah's behavioral health landscape. Through discussion groups, interviews, and data analysis, the Gardner Institute identified key issues, including workforce shortages, system fragmentation, and access barriers, particularly in rural areas and for diverse populations.

As a living document, the plan will evolve with the changing needs of Utahns. By fostering collaboration and innovation, Utah aims to create a comprehensive and coordinated approach to behavioral health, ensuring that every resident has access to the care and support they need for a healthier and more fulfilling life. Addressing mental health and substance use disorders is crucial for building a stronger, more resilient Utah.

2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

After the remarkable success of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, Utah will once again welcome the world in 2034. To help inform planning for the Games, the Gardner Institute provides ongoing economic leadership that highlights the significant benefits of hosting the Olympics.

Projections indicate the 2034 Olympics will generate $6.6 billion in output, nearly $3.9 billion in state GDP, and over 42,000 job-years of employment. Gardner Institute research also recognizes the costs associated with the Games, including an estimated $2.4 billion in net new direct expenditures. With Utah well-positioned to host, planners can focus on optimizing infrastructure, managing visitor experiences, and leveraging the Games for long-term economic and social gains.

Utah has changed dramatically since 2002. With the state's population projected to reach 4.1 million by 2034 (nearly double its size in 2002), half of the population in 2034 will not have experienced the 2002 Olympics. This includes those too young to remember, new residents, and those not yet born. This demographic shift underscores the need to create a renewed sense of Olympic legacy and excitement for the upcoming Games.

The Gardner Institute's ongoing economic research provides critical insights for decision-makers and stakeholders to ensure the 2034 Winter Games deliver lasting benefits to Utah. Now is the time to ensure Utah is ready for its golden moment.

Economic Impacts of the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Utah
(Based on 2024–2035 economic activity; constant 2023 dollars)

Total Direct Spending **$4.1 Billion** — Out-of-State Spending, In-State Revenue Sources, and Displacement **$1.7 Billion** = Net New Utah Direct Spending **$2.4 Billion** → **Economic Impact Model of Multiplier Effects***

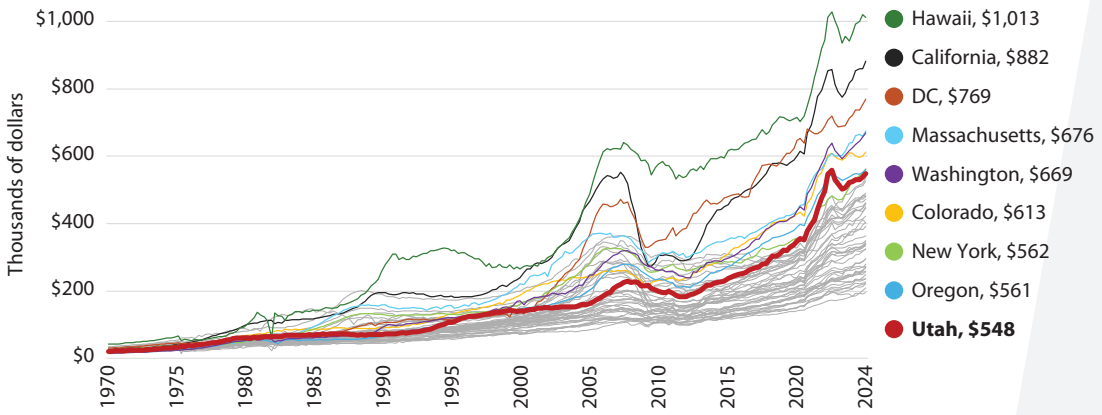
Total Utah Economic Impact
- GDP: **$3.9 Billion**
- Employment: **42,040 Job-Years**
- Output: **$6.6 Billion**

Note: *The economic impact model estimates the true multiplier, dynamic, and other effects resulting from the net new direct spending activity in Utah's economy.
Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute analysis of Salt Lake City-Utah Committee for the Games budget data, using the REMI PI+ model v3.1.0

Housing, Construction, and Real Estate

Experts largely agree that housing affordability represents a major constraint to Utah's long-term growth. The Gardner Institute provides state decision-makers with critical data related to affordability, residential and non-residential construction trends, and market stability.

Quarterly Median Sales Price of Single-Family Homes by State, 1970-2024 Q4



Source: National Association of Realtors

Recent research highlights a concerning trend. While housing prices have stabilized, they remain high, excluding many potential homebuyers. Interest rates exacerbate the problem, creating a significant barrier to entry. The median multiple ratio, an indicator of affordability for new buyers, reveals that several Utah counties are severely unaffordable.

Rental rates saw some moderation, but the underlying challenges persist. Construction of new housing units declined, particularly for apartments, potentially leading to a tighter rental market in the coming years. The Gardner Institute's research emphasizes the need for diverse housing options, including condominiums and townhomes, to address affordability concerns.

Economic and demographic shifts also continue to reshape Utah's housing landscape. Slower job growth and net migration could ease demand, but a favorable age structure, with a significant portion of the population in prime homebuying years, may counteract these trends.

The Gardner Institute's data-driven analysis provides a roadmap for policymakers seeking to address Utah's housing challenges. By understanding the interplay of prices, interest rates, construction activity, and demographic forces, leaders can make informed decisions to promote affordability and ensure the state's continued economic prosperity.

Great Salt Lake Strike Team

Utah's Great Salt Lake provides more than just a scenic backdrop. It's a vital economic engine, a crucial stopover for millions of migratory birds, and a defining characteristic of the state's identity.

Years of drought and water diversion have pushed this natural wonder to the brink, threatening its delicate ecosystem and the countless benefits it provides. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the Great Salt Lake Strike Team, a collaboration between Utah's public research universities and state agencies, is stepping up to safeguard this vital resource.

Supported by the Gardner Institute, the Strike Team synthesizes complex data into actionable insights for policymakers. This informs efforts to improve water management and mitigate the adverse effects of the lake's decline. In 2024, their analysis guided management of the causeway berm and highlighted the need for comprehensive water conservation policies. By quantifying the economic risks, the Strike Team underscores the importance of investing in the lake's health. Reduced lake levels threaten billions of dollars and thousands of jobs, particularly in mineral extraction.

The Strike Team's success lies in the collaborative spirit between the partners involved. A multi-disciplinary approach helps facilitate policy recommendations based on sound science while considering the lake's interconnected ecosystem. Looking ahead, the Strike Team will explore innovative conservation strategies, including water banking and effluent dedication. Climate models that project rising temperatures will intensify these challenges, requiring long-term solutions.

The Great Salt Lake Strike Team exemplifies the power of collaborative research and paves the way for a sustainable future for Great Salt Lake. Their work ensures a legacy of environmental, economic, and health stewardship for future generations.

> *"Restoring Great Salt Lake to health will not be a one-year, one-policy, one-constituency solution. Rather, a coordinated, data-driven approach will be necessary so decision-makers can evaluate tradeoffs and balance competing interests. The Strike Team makes this possible by providing authoritative, accurate, and current information about the lake's past, present, and potential future."*
>
> – Brian Steed, Great Salt Lake Commissioner, *Great Salt Lake Strike Team Co-Chair*

Utah-Federal Government Nexus Research

At a time when the federal government navigates significant policy shifts and spending cuts, the Gardner Institute prepared 13 data summaries that illuminate the economic connections between Utah and the federal government. These resources equip decision-makers with the insights needed to promote continued prosperity for the Beehive State.

The federal government plays a significant role in Utah's economy, contributing substantially to employment across various sectors. Defense remains a critical industry, with tens of thousands of Utahns employed by the military, federal civilian agencies, and private defense contractors. The presence of Hill Air Force Base and other installations contributes significantly to this sector; making Utah a strategic location for national defense activities.

Beyond defense, the federal government supports various state programs and services, comprising a considerable share of Utah's overall budget. This includes federal funding for education, health care, transportation, infrastructure, housing, and social services for low-income, qualifying individuals. Medicaid also represents an area with considerable federal support for health care services.

Federal dollars support key sectors like tourism, with the National Park Service being a major player. Additionally, the federal government supports infrastructure improvements, including airports, roads, and other means of transportation. Public land discussions are also key, with the federal government owning over 60% of the state's total land area.

The balance of payments between Utah and the federal government—the flow of taxes paid by Utahns versus the amount of federal funds allocated to the state—reveals Utah's unique position in the national landscape. Utah typically gives more to the federal government than it receives. Due to its young educated workforce and generally strong economy, Utah tends to have a smaller portion of low-income residents who require federal assistance.

Given these intricate economic ties, the Gardner Institute's data summaries offer a comprehensive understanding of the key linkages between Utah and the federal government. This knowledge provides critical background for Utah's leaders as they navigate a future defined by federal policy adjustments and work to ensure Utah's continued economic strength.

Public Finance and Tax Modernization

Utah's "elite" economy reflects recent decades of soaring economic momentum, propelled by strong population and job growth, a relatively young and well-educated workforce, the establishment of Utah's tech sector and other growing industries including advanced manufacturing and life sciences, and prudent fiscal management by policymakers.

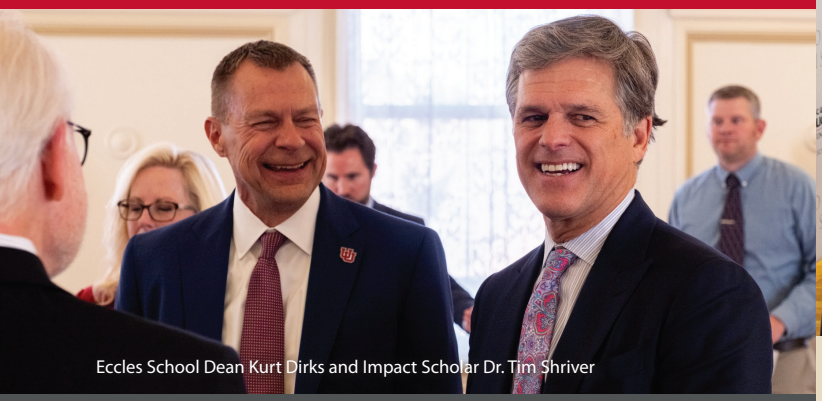
A changing economy requires frequent assessment of state and local government tax systems to ensure they align with the modern economy and generate sufficient revenue to meet the demands of a growing population.

The Tax Modernization series, started in 2018, provides policymakers and the public with visual guides to better understand each of Utah's primary taxes and fees: sales tax, user fees, property tax, individual income tax, and business taxes. These guides highlight the unique features and challenges of each source of revenue. Sales tax, while still a critical component to state and local revenue portfolios, no longer paces as well with the economy due to consumption patterns shifting away from taxable goods toward largely untaxed services. User fees, such as gas tax and vehicle registration fees, water fees, and higher education tuition, allow for public choice but, as currently designed, may misalign with usage levels and often do not fully fund the services they provide. Property tax provides highly stable and predictable revenue for local governments due to its low rate and broad base of largely immovable property. Income tax now represents the largest single source of state revenue but poses volatility risks along with its faster growth. Taxes paid by businesses, which include property, sales, income, and various excise taxes, affect the state's economic competitiveness.

The Gardner Institute positioned itself as a leader in public finance research through its buildout of the public finance practice area, employing a team of economists and relying on the expertise of the Public Finance Council to conduct research in tax policy, revenue forecasting, fiscal impacts, budget stress testing, budget transparency, and public finance best practices.

Unsurpassed Societal Impact

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute plays an important role in bringing national and global thought leaders to Utah, fostering constructive dialogue and informed decision-making. These scholars participate in several campus and community events during their visits and help the University of Utah achieve its goal of generating unsurpassed societal impact that benefits all Utahns.



Eccles School Dean Kurt Dirks and Impact Scholar Dr. Tim Shriver

Impact Scholar Dr. Arthur Brooks and University of Utah President Taylor Randall

Raj Chetty

University of Utah Impact Scholars

University of Utah Impact Scholars include distinguished scholars and public intellectuals chosen for their ability to contribute to an exceptional student experience, engage with and inform local policymakers, participate in joint research opportunities, and consult with campus leadership on societal impact. Through their expertise, Impact Scholars help shape a vibrant learning environment that fosters leadership, innovation, and a deeper understanding of pressing societal issues.

Dr. Arthur Brooks is the William Henry Bloomberg Professor of the Practice of Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Professor of Management Practice at the Harvard Business School, where he teaches courses on leadership, happiness, and social entrepreneurship. He is also a columnist at The Atlantic, where he writes the popular "How to Build a Life" column.

Dr. Timothy Shriver is a husband, father, educator, best-selling author, and the Chairman of the Special Olympics. In that capacity, he has driven the largest expansion of the organization, growing the movement from one million athletes to over six million athletes in 193 countries around the world. He is also the co-founder and Chair of UNITE – an initiative to promote national unity and solidarity across differences.

Societal Impact Seminars

University of Utah Societal Impact Seminars enrich the community by sharing national thought leaders, distinguished scholars, and innovative thinkers with Utah decision-makers. The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute hosts the seminars in partnership with the Hinckley Institute of Politics and under the direction of President Taylor Randall. The seminars seek to magnify the exchange of ideas, expand viewpoint diversity, and create maximum societal impact in Utah.

- **Michael Strain**
  Director of Economic Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute
- **Jonathan Rauch**
  Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution
- **Steven Chu**
  Former U.S. Secretary of Energy
- **Yuval Levin**
  Director of Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies, American Enterprise Institute
- **Raj Chetty**
  Director of Opportunity Insights, Harvard University

Jonathan Rauch

Yuval Levin

Michael Strain

Looking Ahead

At 7 p.m. MST on Friday, February 10, 2034, the opening ceremony for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will begin at Rice-Eccles Stadium on the University of Utah campus in Salt Lake City, Utah. An estimated three billion people from more than 200 countries will watch the event. This presents not just a sporting event, but a unique opportunity to propel the state toward new levels of prosperity.

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute stands ready to guide Utah through this pivotal moment, offering data-driven insights and policy recommendations to ensure that the Games serve as a catalyst for lasting, inclusive growth.

A new report, "Keepers of the Flame: Utah's Olympic-Sized Opportunity," serves as a roadmap for navigating the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. It highlights Utah's current economic strengths while addressing critical issues that could threaten its long-term success. By leveraging the Olympic spotlight and harnessing its expertise, the Gardner Institute aims to help Utah maximize the Games' impact and secure a brighter future for all its residents.

A Foundation of Strength:

Utah's Magnificent Seven

Utah begins its preparations for the 2034 Games from a position of strength. The state boasts what we call the "Magnificent Seven" – a constellation of economic achievements that sets it apart from the rest of the nation:

1. **Economic Dynamism and Diversity:** Utah's economy is not only growing rapidly but also diversifying across various sectors, making it more resilient to economic fluctuations. In 2024, Utah's real GDP growth led the nation at 4.5%, significantly outpacing the national average.

2. **Nation-Leading Household Income and Lowest Poverty:** Utah leads the nation in household income after adjusting for regional price parity, while also maintaining the lowest poverty rate. This provides Utah families with financial security and greater economic opportunities.

3. **Upward Mobility:** Utah stands out as a place where children have a high likelihood of exceeding their parents' income, reflecting a society where hard work and determination lead to advancement.

4. **Widespread Prosperity:** Utah demonstrates a relatively equal distribution of income, fostering a sense of shared prosperity and social cohesion.

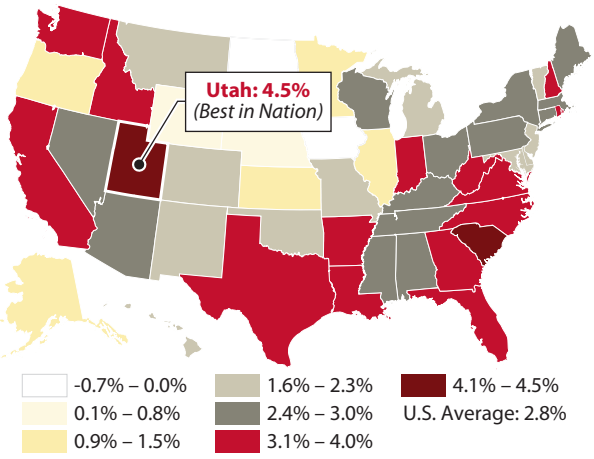
5. **Well-Trained and Educated Workforce:** Utah's workforce is highly skilled and educated, equipping the state to compete in the global economy and adapt to technological advancements.

6. **Fast-Growing and Youngest Population:** Utah's population is not only growing rapidly but is also the youngest in the nation, which translates to a dynamic and innovative workforce.

7. **Nation-Leading Social Cohesion:** Utah enjoys high levels of social capital, characterized by strong community bonds, civic engagement, and trust.

Economic Growth

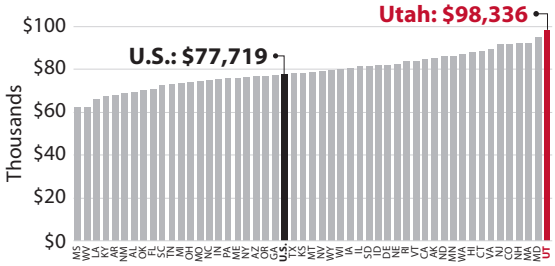
Real GDP growth, year-over percent change, 2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Median Household Income

Adjusted for regional price parity, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Social Capital

Social Capital Index, top ten states, 2021

Utah	**93.8**
Minnesota	89.9
Vermont	86.4
North Dakota	83.7
Maine	79.9
New Hampshire	78.3
Colorado	78.2
Wyoming	77.0
Wisconsin	75.2
Nebraska	72.1

Source: Utah Foundation

Navigating the Challenges:

Utah's Troubling Seven

Despite its impressive strengths, Utah faces challenges that threaten its long-term prosperity. These "Troubling Seven" require proactive solutions and strategic planning:

1. **Housing Affordability and Homelessness:** Utah's housing market has become increasingly unaffordable, leading to a rise in homelessness and limiting access to homeownership for many.

2. **Traffic Congestion:** Growing population and economic activity have strained Utah's transportation infrastructure, resulting in significant traffic congestion and reduced quality of life.

3. **Public Education - Third Grade Reading:** A concerning number of Utah third graders are not proficient in reading, which can hinder their future academic and career success. In 2024, only 46.7% of Utah third graders scored proficient on the RISE test.

4. **Higher Education - Graduation Rates:** Utah's higher education enrollment and completion rates lag behind other states, limiting the potential of its workforce and economy.

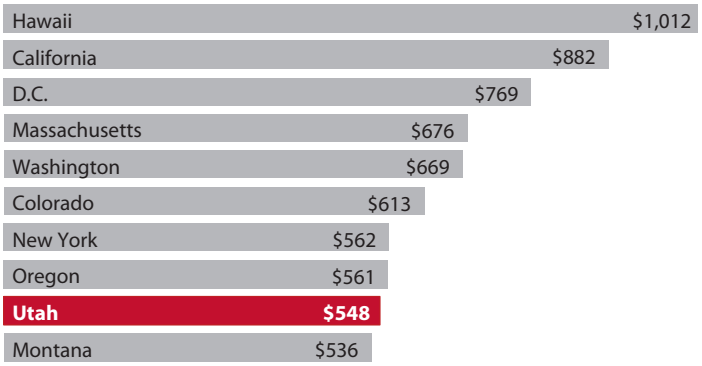
5. **Water and Great Salt Lake:** The declining water levels of the Great Salt Lake pose significant environmental, economic, and health risks to the state.

6. **Energy Supply:** Utah faces potential energy deficits due to increasing demand, constraints on supply, and the need to transition to cleaner energy sources.

7. **Behavioral Health:** Utah, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a growing behavioral health crisis, requiring greater access to mental health and substance abuse services.

U.S. Ten Most Expensive Housing Markets

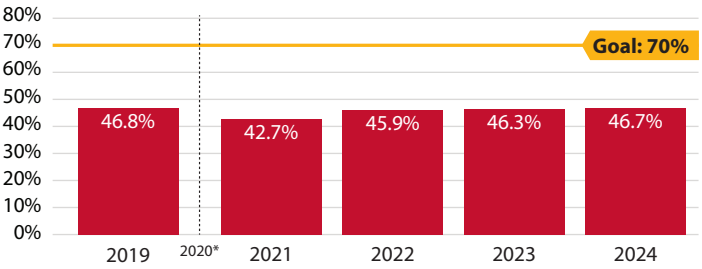
Quarterly median sales price of single-family home, in thousands, 2024 Q4



Source: National Association of Realtors

Utah 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

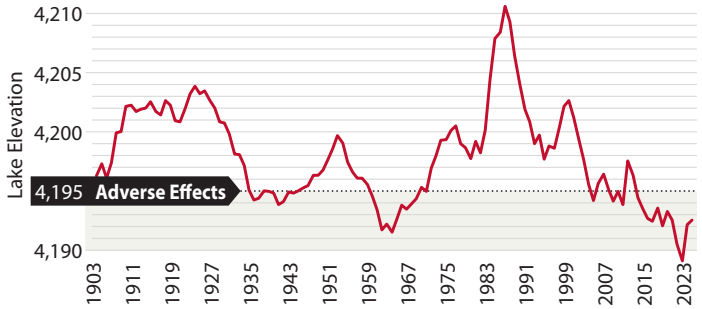
The share of third graders scoring proficient on the RISE reading test.



*2020 data unavaliable due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Great Salt Lake Water Level

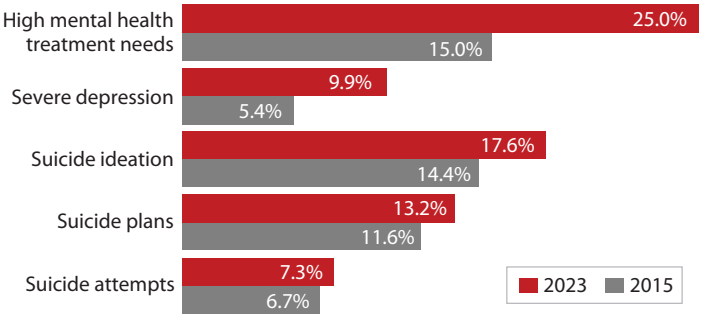
South arm water-year-end elevation, 1903-2024



Note: The causeway berm closed in 1966.
Source: US Geological Survey historical elevation at Saltair Boat harbor and Saline, Utah

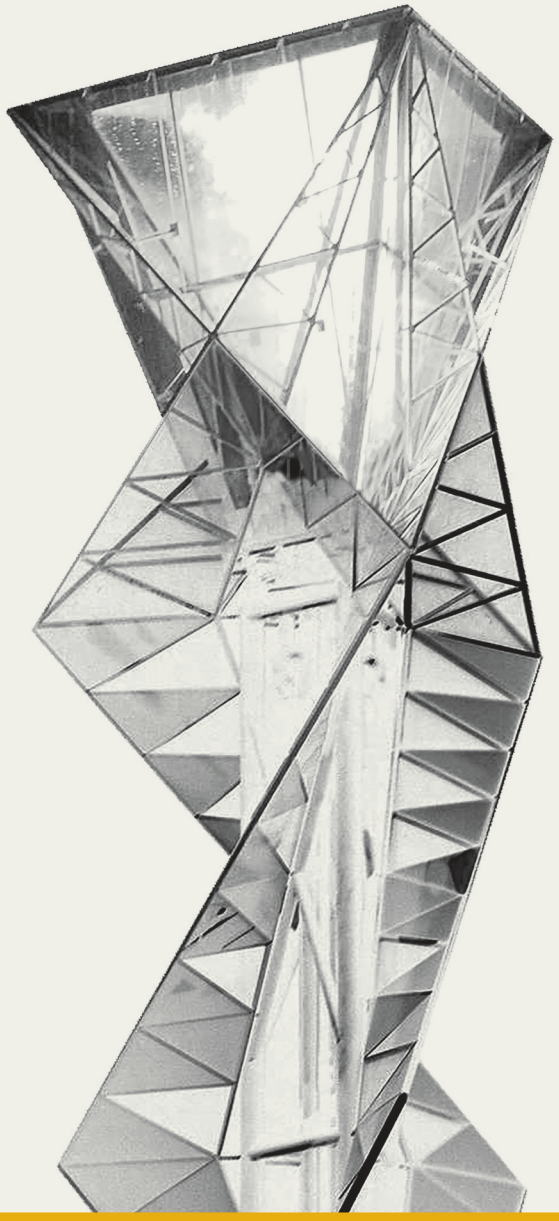
Utah Youth Mental Health Indicators

Share of Utah middle and high school students with select mental health needs



Note: Survey responses include students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12.
Source: Student Health and Risk Prevention: Prevention Needs Assessment Survey. Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Starting Seven



The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute offers seven consequential ideas associated with each of the Troubling Seven. These ideas serve as a conversation starter for a statewide dialogue that will benefit from more ideas, large and small. Utah's public policy table will then become "bigger and rounder" as ideas are explored, developed, heard, debated, prioritized, and implemented.

1 **Housing Affordability**
Create a statewide community land trust.

2 **Traffic Congestion**
Prioritize connected autonomous vehicles.

3 **Third Grade Reading**
Place a reading pro in K-3 classrooms.

4 **Higher Education Graduation Rates**
Expand catalyst centers into SLC.

5 **Great Salt Lake**
Conserve 250 Kilometer Acre Feet (KAF) to 500 KAF annually.

6 **Energy Supply**
Invest in a state energy research fund.

7 **Behavioral Health**
Align behavioral health efforts and investments with Utah's strategic plan.

Our Commitment to Utah

As we look to the next decade of service at the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, our commitment to the people of Utah remains steadfast and resolute. We pledge to advance our mission to provide trusted research, data, and analysis on critical issues, and to serve as a resource and catalyst for informed decision-making across the state. Our vision is to empower communities, inspire policy innovation, and promote a sustainable future by leveraging comprehensive insights and fostering collaborative partnerships. We embrace our role as a leading convener of public discourse and will cultivate a dynamic, inclusive environment where new ideas can flourish and innovative solutions can emerge. Through robust research, strategic outreach, and a tireless pursuit of excellence, we aim to enhance life quality for all Utahns, ensuring that our state remains a vibrant, economically resilient, and thriving community. Together, with the strength of our team and the spirit of "The Utah Way," we are poised to contribute profoundly to the well-being and prosperity of the great state that we call home.

–Gardner Institute Team

Ivory Experience students, monthly community leader lunch with Clark Ivory, 2024

Student Experiences

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute offers a wide array of experiences designed to enhance the educational and professional journey of University of Utah students.

Through internships, the institute provides students with hands-on opportunities to work on substantive policy initiatives alongside our researchers and state decision-makers.

Our Graduate Assistant program further deepens this engagement, allowing students to collaborate on impactful projects and contribute to key policy analyses relevant to Utah. These roles develop students' research and analytical skills and also expand their professional networks, cultivating future career prospects in public policy. In addition, the Ivory Experience program offers specialized learning experiences that connect undergraduate students with state and community leaders, providing mentoring opportunities and invaluable insights into the practical applications of their academic studies.

Engaging with Utah's premier public policy institute grants students unique exposure to decision-makers and leading business figures, enhancing their understanding of real-world challenges and opportunities. This exposure broadens their perspective and empowers them to influence and shape policy decisions within the state. By participating in these diverse programs, students gain unparalleled access to the dynamic interface of academia, business, and government, setting the stage for meaningful contributions to the field of public policy and sustaining a lifelong commitment to civic engagement. Our student experiences help drive the University's goal of generating unsurpassed societal impact.

Ivory Experience students with Utah Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson, 2022

Tim Shriver addresses students, 2024

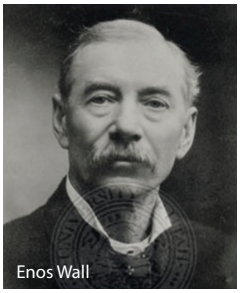
Presidential Scholars, 2024

University of Utah impact scholar Dr. Arthur Brooks speaking to Eccles School students, 2024

The Thomas S. Monson Center

The Enos Wall Mansion sits proudly on historic South Temple Street in Salt Lake City. Built at the beginning of the 20th century, the all-concrete classical revival mansion is an emblem of a former era of Utah's capital city.

Enos Wall acquired the property at 411 East South Temple in 1904 from the James Sharp family. A significant figure in Salt Lake City, Sharp served as the sixth mayor, a member of the University of Utah Board of Regents, a Mormon bishop, and a member and Speaker of the House in the Utah Territorial Legislature. He was also the University Chancellor between 1882 and 1883. Wall commissioned renowned architect Richard K. A. Kletting, who also designed the Utah State Capitol, to enhance the mansion.



Enos Wall

Kletting transformed the building by encasing it in cement, using steel framing, reinforced concrete, adding east and south porticoes, a porte-cochere entrance, servant quarters, and a new automobile carriage house. Completed in 1912, the mansion boasted a grand street entrance, a formal drawing room, a mahogany-paneled library, dining rooms, a kitchen, a servants' staircase and tunnel, family and guest bedrooms, a ballroom, and game rooms. Modern amenities included an electric elevator, centralized vacuum system, steam heating, luxurious wood detailing, marble details, fireplaces in each bedroom, and a rooftop promenade. The grounds featured a tennis court, greenhouse, and servants' quarters accessible via an underground tunnel.

The Wall family frequently hosted prominent social events after moving in, and it was rumored that even Theodore Roosevelt visited. Enos Wall, a mining magnate, passed away eight years later, leaving behind this symbol of his success. Following his death, his wife, Mary, moved to California, where she died in 1923. The mansion was sold that same year to the Salt Lake Lodge of B'nai Brith, a Jewish fraternal organization, and renamed the "Covenant House," serving as a hub for the Jewish social scene. The growing community eventually sought a larger space, leading to the sale of the mansion to Pacific National Life Assurance Co. in 1950, which added a low- profile west wing in 1956.

A Community Gathering Place and Embassy for Thought

Thomas Friedman

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute serves as a vital gathering place and embassy for thought leadership in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City, where decision-makers convene to discuss important topics impacting Utahns.

As of 2025, the Gardner Institute has hosted hundreds of community events, trainings, seminars, symposiums, and other specialized gatherings that bring together state leaders and policymakers for discussions that steer the state toward an inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable future for all Utahns. One of the Institute's flagship series is the monthly Newsmaker Breakfasts. These gatherings offer a unique platform for open dialogue between policymakers, industry leaders, and the broader community. Attendees discuss pressing issues, examining current events and trends that influence Utah's social and economic landscape. Newsmaker Breakfasts have become a prominent event in the community, fostering a spirit of curiosity and engagement that resonates across the state.

In addition to these breakfasts, the annual Informed Decision Maker of the Year Award is a testament to the Institute's dedication to recognizing and celebrating impactful leadership. This prestigious award honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional foresight, integrity, and dedication to making well-informed

Kem Gardner

Home of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute


Wall Mansion foyer c.1912

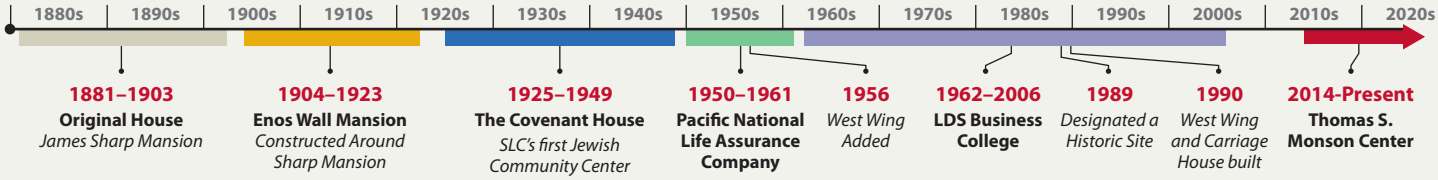

Monson Center lobby, 2025

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints purchased the mansion in 1962 for the LDS Business College and made significant changes, converting parts into a reception area, bookstore, student diner, and student lounge. An east wing, matching the west wing's design, replaced the original port-cochere entrance in 1974. In 2006, the college relocated, and the mansion remained vacant until 2014, when the Church gifted it to the University of Utah.

The university undertook extensive renovations to restore its original grandeur, demolishing the east wing, restoring the port-cochere and circular driveway, and beautifying the grounds.

Today, the Enos Wall mansion, now the Thomas S. Monson Center, houses the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute and serves as a center for thought leadership in Utah.

Thomas S. Monson Center Timeline



Leadership

decisions that benefit the community. The recipients exemplify the institute's mission by contributing to the marketplace of ideas and sparking positive change in Utah and beyond.

Arthur Brooks and Tim Shriver further enhance the Gardner Institute's role as a vital community gathering place. These distinguished experts from various fields bring fresh perspectives to the state and provide unique learning opportunities for Utah decision-makers. Through these engagements, Impact Scholars contribute to a vibrant intellectual environment that energizes and informs the community. In addition, the Gardner Institute hosts Societal Impact Seminars designed to enrich the community by connecting national thought leaders, distinguished scholars, and innovative thinkers with Utah decision-makers. Co-hosted by the Hinckley Institute of Politics and under the direction of President Taylor Randall, the seminars seek to magnify the exchange of ideas, expand viewpoint diversity, and create maximum societal impact in Utah.

The Gardner Institute stands as a place where Utah's present challenges meet up with innovative opportunities and future-focused policies. Its strategic location downtown underscores its accessibility and integral role in shaping policy discussions. By convening a wide array of stakeholders—ranging from elected officials and business executives to community advocates and residents—the institute acts as a critical catalyst for informed decision-making.

Kem C. Gardner

Raised on a Wyoming farm as the son of a schoolteacher, Kem became one of the Intermountain West's most prominent real estate developers. During his 38 years of community building, Kem, along with his partners and associates, has developed over 33 million square feet of commercial real estate.

Never satisfied with business success alone, Kem devotes a significant portion of his time and energy to the betterment of Utah. He has done so based on advice he received early in his career from a prominent Utah business leader who told him, "You don't give very much when you give of your money; give of your time." Kem has done just that by fostering the success of the Utah Symphony, Salt Lake City International Airport, the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, Intermountain Health, the United Way of Salt Lake, the University of Utah, and more.

Utahns recognize Kem as the person who can make great things happen in the community. The Gardner Institute builds on Kem's extraordinary legacy by working at the intersection of business and civic life to serve the people of Utah.

Partners in the Community

The following individuals and entities help support the research mission of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute.

LEGACY PARTNERS

The Gardner Company
Christian and Marie Gardner Family
Intermountain Health
Clark and Christine Ivory Foundation
KSL and Deseret News
Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation
Mountain America Credit Union
Salt Lake City Corporation
Salt Lake County
University of Utah Health
Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity
WCF Insurance
Zions Bank

EXECUTIVE PARTNERS

The Boyer Company
Clyde Companies

SUSTAINING PARTNERS

Enbridge
Salt Lake Chamber
Staker Parson Materials and Construction
Wells Fargo

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Advisory Board

Conveners
Michael O. Leavitt
Mitt Romney

Board
Scott Anderson, Co-Chair
Gail Miller, Co-Chair
Doug Anderson
Deborah Bayle
Roger Boyer
Michelle Camacho
Sophia M. DiCaro
Cameron Diehl
Kurt Dirks
Lisa Eccles
Spencer P. Eccles
Christian Gardner
Kem C. Gardner
Kimberly Gardner
Natalie Gochnour
Brandy Grace
Jeremy Hafen
Clark Ivory
Ann Marie McDonald
Derek Miller
Ann Millner
Sterling Nielsen
Jason Perry
Ray Pickup
Gary B. Porter
Taylor Randall
Jill Remington Love
Josh Romney
Charles W. Sorenson
James Lee Sorenson
Vicki Varela

Ex Officio *(invited)*
Governor Spencer Cox
Speaker Mike Schultz
Senate President Stuart Adams
Representative Angela Romero
Senator Luz Escamilla
Mayor Jenny Wilson
Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Staff and Advisors

Leadership Team


Natalie Gochnour
Associate Dean and Director

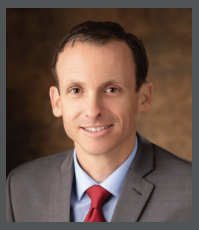

Jennifer Robinson
Chief of Staff


Mallory Bateman
Director of Demographic Research

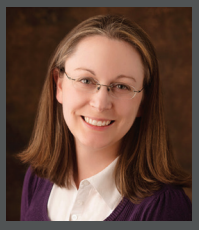

Phil Dean
Chief Economist and Senior Research Fellow


Shelley Kruger
Director of Accounting and Finance

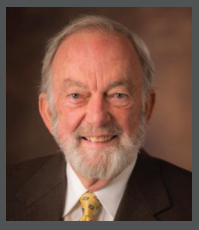

Colleen Larson
Associate Director of Administration


Nate Lloyd
Director of Economic Research


Dianne Meppen
Director of Community Research


Laura Summers
Director of Public Policy Research


Nicholas Thiriot
Communications Director


James A. Wood
Ivory-Boyer Senior Fellow

Staff

Eric Albers, Senior Natural Resources Policy Analyst
Samantha Ball, Dignity Index Research Director
Parker Banta, Public Policy Analyst
Melanie Beagley, Senior Health Research Analyst
Kristina Bishop, Research Economist
Andrea Thomas Brandley, Senior Education Analyst
Kara Ann Byrne, Senior Health and Human Services Analyst
Nate Christensen, Research Economist
Moira Dillow, Housing, Construction, and Real Estate Analyst
John C. Downen, Senior Research Fellow
Dejan Eskic, Senior Research Fellow and Scholar
Kate Farr, Monson Center Maintenance Specialist
Chance Hansen, Communications Specialist
Emily Harris, Senior Demographer
Michael T. Hogue, Senior Research Statistician
Mike Hollingshaus, Senior Demographer
Madeleine Jones, Dignity Index Field Director
Jennifer Leaver, Senior Tourism Analyst
Maddy Oritt, Senior Public Finance Economist
Levi Pace, Senior Research Economist
Praopan Pratoomchat, Senior Research Economist
Heidi Prior, Public Policy Analyst
Megan Rabe, Demography Research Associate
Natalie Roney, Research Economist
Shannon Simonsen, Research Coordinator
Paul Springer, Senior Graphic Designer
Gaby Velasquez, Monson Center Special Events Coordinator
Cayley Wintch, Monson Center Building Manager
David Witt, Dignity Index Program Associate

Senior Advisors

Jonathan Ball, Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Ari Bruening, Community-at-Large
Silvia Castro, Suazo Business Center
Gary Cornia, Marriott School of Business
Beth Jarosz, Population Reference Bureau
Darin Mellott, CBRE
Pamela S. Perlich, Community-at-Large
Chris Redgrave, Community-at-Large
Juliette Tennert, Community-at-Large

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute 10-Year Report to the Community
Lead Author: Nicholas Thiriot; Contributors: Parker Banta, Mallory Bateman, Phil Dean, Natalie Gochnour, Chance Hansen, Nate Lloyd, Maddy Oritt, Jennifer Robinson, Paul Springer, Laura Summers

Published September 2025

INFORMED DECISIONS™

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute | 411 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111