

Remote Online Initiative kicks off in four NC Kansas Counties

Scholarships now available for certification in remote work

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Kansas State University and the North Central Regional Planning Commission are launching a project in four north central Kansas counties that officials say could boost income for participants while providing an economic boost for rural communities.

This Remote Online Initiative project is funded by a NetWorked Community Solutions Grant from NetWork Kansas. Project coordinator Ron Wilson said residents in Clay, Dickinson, Marshall and Washington counties are eligible for scholarships to pay for month-long online classes that will provide certification as a remote work professional or remote work leader.

“Remote work creates opportunity for rural residents and expands the talent pool available to rural businesses,” Wilson said. “These month-long courses will equip participants to work remotely and receive certification...thus demonstrating proven skills to potential clients or employers.”

The online class scholarships begin Oct. 2 for professional and remote work leader options. The professional course also will be held in November and January. “October is the only opportunity for the remote work leader class scholarship, so we encourage those interested to act quickly,” Wilson said. The first deadline to apply for a scholarship is Sept. 27.

Registration is available online at www.kansasremotework.com. The online classes are already available to anyone in Kansas, but these scholarships are only offered in the target counties. The cost for the course, if not covered by scholarship, is \$199 for the remote professional course and \$249 for the remote work leader course.

Earlier this year, Wilson – in his role as director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development – released results of a survey on remote work indicating that nearly one-half of respondent organizations currently employ remote workers.

In addition, more than 80% believe remote work will continue, and more than 90% indicated the number of remote and hybrid workers will remain the same or increase.

“These courses should help position Kansas to succeed in that setting,” Wilson said.

“Ultimately, my hope is that we can make rural Kansas the location of choice for people of all ages,” Wilson said. “Rural Kansas has many quality-of-life assets: safe neighborhoods, good schools, open spaces, recreational opportunities and more. Modern technology makes it possible for a person to choose a rural lifestyle and connect digitally with customers, clients and employers anywhere in the world.”

Debra Carlson Ohlde recently completed the certification, which was developed and is currently offered by Utah State University. Ohlde is the strategic development advisor with the North Central Regional Planning Commission.

“Even though I’ve worked in a hybrid environment for almost 30 years, several modules (in the class) brought to light things I hadn’t considered, and broadened my thinking about best practices for managing remote teams,” Ohlde said. “If you work remotely or are considering moving to a hybrid or a remote work environment, invest in yourself and learn how to do it well.”

More information on the Remote Online Initiative is available online from www.kansasremotework.com.