

Utah Life Sciences Elevated

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That the State of Utah's economy has been on a rapid rise over the last decade is not new news. Known as a regional technology hub (Silicon Slopes), it has also been a magnet for corporate headquarters and regional operating centers—from Goldman Sachs, Adobe and SAP (Qualtrics) to the National Security Agency's (NSA) decision to set up and operate its globally-focused data center, things are definitely happening in the "[Beehive State](#)." But less known, and just as significant, the life sciences sector flourishes in Utah—with a nexus in the Capital of the Intermountain West, the Salt Lake City Metro area.

Key Ingredients for Success

Utah is no longer a "best kept secret" as it is the third fastest growing population (per capita) in the nation. Known as a tech industry regional

cluster called Silicon Slopes, Greater Salt Lake Metro now has over 2 million people and key assets—a bustling international airport, a State Capital and major academic medical center (11 institutions offering life science-related programs), it also happens to be a thriving cultural and spiritual center as well as a treasure trove for human capital. It has been discovered in a big way. A thriving, outdoor enthusiast-focused culture, Utah's population is ranked 4th healthiest in the United States and health-related culture and consciousness manifests in an upbeat, youthful, and pulsating business culture.

The most youthful state in the nation, Utah's labor force is the envy of much of America. Education and success is held in high esteem culturally—the state has the 9th most educated population in the nation has measured by proportion of residents earning a university degrees. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Utah significantly outpaced the rest of the nation in the economic expansion since 2010—why?

A Brief History Few Know of

Salt Lake City is the capital of a region covering nearly 20% of the U.S. "lower-48-state landmass known as the "Intermountain West." A vast expanse of land that includes spectacular beauty and the most isolated areas in the contiguous United States, the region included Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana Nevada and the western edge of Colorado. The enterprising culture of this region, in part, reflects a rugged and hard-working past manifest in an individual and collective quest for progress deeply infused in the culture: migrants or "pioneers" seeking spiritual, economic and political freedom settled the state. The Latter Day Saints (LDS) found a home in Utah and expanded from there: settling Las Vegas, San Diego and even livened up what was a sleepy "Californio" village called Yerba Buena (later to be called San Francisco) when pioneers arrived and commenced the settlement's very first building boom.

Salt Lake Metro grew to what today is over 2 million. With a booming economy, unrivaled outdoor access and a burgeoning (and diversifying) urban culture, Salt Lake becomes a center of incoming migration from all parts of the country—influenced deeply by Californian migration. The inclusion of the University of Utah into the “Pac 12” symbolically reminds of the deep ties of Utah to the Pacific Coast that history buffs appreciate.

Human Capital

Human capital represents a fundamental value proposition for the State and its life science industry. More companies increasingly consider Salt Lake Metro over Seattle or San Francisco in part because of incredible access to world-class ski resorts, and unrivaled outdoor experiences not to mention rapidly evolving urban amenities but more importantly—the regions young, growing and well-educated population. With 200,000 full-time students living around Metro Salt Lake, companies have access to a young, vibrant and intensely-driven talent pool.

Combine youthful energy, talent, spectacular outdoor access and rapidly growing multi-cultural urban amenities and you spell Salt Lake and environs evolution as an urban center. Although real estate and land prices are definitely on a steady rise the cost of living and doing business is still reasonable when compared to the Bay Area and coastal Southern California not to mention Seattle. Moreover local and state government operates efficiently and crime is relatively low compared to many urban centers while primary education options are robust.

The Life Sciences Secret—Not for Long

Salt Lake City Metro (from Provo through Salt Lake to Ogden) is home to dynamic regional life sciences hub with a healthy mix of medical device, biopharmaceutical, diagnostic and appliance firms operating in a thriving regional cluster. [BioUtah](#) reports in its' *Life Sciences Industry* publication that with 1,038 life science companies, 38% are

distribution focused, while 34.4% are involved with testing and medical laboratory work, 17.3% design and make medical devices and equipment and 10.3% develop biotech and pharmaceuticals.

The total economic impact, reports *BioUtah*, is major: approximately 130,439 life sciences jobs equal \$13 billion in GDP and \$7.6 billion in personal income directly feeding that growing economic engine. Utah has led American in terms of jobs in the life sciences sector from the period 2012-2107.

Utah produces 70% of the arterial and vascular access devices used worldwide reports *BioUtah* while investment in Utah's life sciences increased from \$3.2 billion in 2010 to \$5.2 billion in 2016.

Diverse Array of Ventures

A diversified range of commercial life science-focused ventures grow and contribute to a dynamic, entrepreneurial culture. From hot startups such as AI-driven biotech venture [Recursion Pharmaceuticals](#) (\$220+ million raised) to Tolero Pharmaceuticals' nearly [\\$1 billion acquisition](#) by Japanese giant Sumitomo Dainippon Pharma Co to leading medical device ventures such as Merit Medical, BD and more all operate in Utah. [PolarityTE](#), a regenerative medicine startup, exemplifies the growth potential in the state reports *UtahBio*. In the three years since its inception, the company has grown from two to more than 150 employees. Stryker, one of the largest medical device companies, moved to Utah in 2011 recognizing the many benefits Utah offers the life sciences industry. Now they have expanded with the opening of a 137,000-square-foot facility to manufacture the latest-technology to treat patients suffering from acute ischemic stroke.

Academic Research to Startups

Salt Lake Metro has been a magnet for cutting-edge research in the life sciences. The University of Utah, [a leading research institution](#) has been on the forefront of genetic research. For example, its' [School of](#)

[Medicine](#) has pioneered diverse investigations from gene targeting, neural interfaces and stem cells for regenerative medicine. Internationally regarded for its innovative basic science and biomedical research, its' \$246.7 million in research funding has contributed to a top reputation among physicians and scientists. The enterprising culture manifests in many ways including the "U's" [No. 1 status](#) as university to spin-off startups. It shows up in the numbers—[since 2012, over \\$5.7 billion has gone toward the acquisition of University of Utah startups](#). BYU down in Provo possibly represents the most entrepreneurially-minded student body in the country.

NIH Grants

National Institute of Health (NIH) research grants are harnessed in the enterprising state of State of Utah researchers and scientists representing a significant funding source for life sciences research. According to a report titled [Economic Impacts of Utah Life Sciences Industry](#) sponsored by the University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, NIH grants are growing and by 2017 Utah recipients were awarded \$187.5 million in research grants. Over 90% of these grants were life science-related research.

Cancer Research: Huntsman

[Huntsman Cancer Institute \(HCI\)](#) is a [National Cancer Institute \(NCI\) Designated Cancer Center](#) representing one of top oncology research centers in the world with specialties from genetics and inherited cancers to population health to conducting advanced clinical trials. [HCI has made more discoveries in genes for inherited cancers than any other place on the planet](#). Nearly 150,000 cancer patients visit HCI annually.

The Cancer Research Site for Nearly 20% of U.S.

The only Phase I center in the region, HCI operates several clinics that focus on patients with specialized cancer histories (e.g. pancreas,

prostate) and [conducts up to 200](#) clinical trials at any one time. HCI is the only cancer center designated by the NCI in the five-state Intermountain West region (Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Nevada), [which covers nearly 20% of the continental United States landmass](#).

Intermountain Healthcare: A Nexus for Healthcare in the Region

Intermountain Healthcare (IHC) has long been considered a top health system in America. In 52 Great Health Systems to know in 2018, *Becker's Hospital Review* touts Intermountain Healthcare as [a nationally ranked](#) provider with the 2,772-bed system composed of 22 hospitals and more than 185 clinics staffed by Intermountain Medical Group containing about 1,400 primary and secondary care physicians. This non-profit health system sees nearly 700,000 patients per year. IBM Watson Health named four of IHC's hospitals among the 100 Top Hospitals in 2017.

[Known for a focus on innovation](#), including technology, IHC's brand for cutting-edge research evidences a continuous stream of new initiatives such as its recent partnership with Amgen-owned [deCODE Genetics](#) seeking to analyze genetic risk factors of 500,000 patients via IHC hospitals and clinics.

The American Hospital Association's *Hospitals & Health Networks* magazine consistently ranks IHC has one of [the most "Wired" health systems in the nation](#).

IHC is a leading provider of clinical research as a care option consistently ensuring accreditation with [AAHRPP](#) and ongoing expansion of [available study options](#) for community access to the latest and most advanced innovations in medicine.

[IHC's Biorepository](#) is home to one of the largest tissue sample databases in the world and it is now expanding again with further investments occurring.

Active Clinical Trials & Sites in the State

Although just over 3 million in population, clinical trials are booming in Utah. A review of [Clinicaltrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) reveals that there are 1,568 active clinical trials as of this writing. Of these, 1,084 are industry-sponsored studies. Presently, there are 227 Phase I active studies in the Beehive State; 544 Phase II studies and 797 Phase III and IV studies.

TrialSite News Investigator Database Network reveals over 500 FDA registered clinical investigators in the State of Utah. [CenExel](#), a leading Utah-based commercial clinical research organization—known as a world leader in conducting Analgesia studies not to mention significant experience in several other therapeutic indications—received private equity investment and now intelligently expands via careful and select acquisition. Utah is a major hub for cancer clinical trials.

BioUtah

TrialSite News visited with [BioUtah's Kelvyn Cullimore](#) to learn more about the organization the state's life science industry: after all, the company that owns the *TrialSite News* assets is headquartered in downtown Salt Lake City. As President and CEO of this important 501(c)(6) trade association, Cullimore is a charismatic character with an impressive resume combining business and government: as a life science professional, Cullimore was the CEO of a medical appliance venture for many years orchestrating a private equity buy-out of the company. Notably, Mr. Cullimore was the founder of the City of Cottonwood Heights, becoming the first Mayor of the nice town nestled right next to the mighty Wasatch mountains. Active with everything life sciences in the State, from organizing the successful annual [Utah Life Sciences Summit](#) conference to meeting with government officials and politicians evangelizing the importance of the life sciences industry to producing research for business development and public policy, while working furiously to facilitate collaboration and communications across

medical device, biopharmaceutical and diagnostic companies in the state, Mr. Cullimore and staff are an important contact point for those that seek to learn more about establishing a beachhead in Utah.

Call to Action: For those interested in learning more about clinical research in the state of Utah, contact [UtahBio](#).



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