

AUGUST 2023

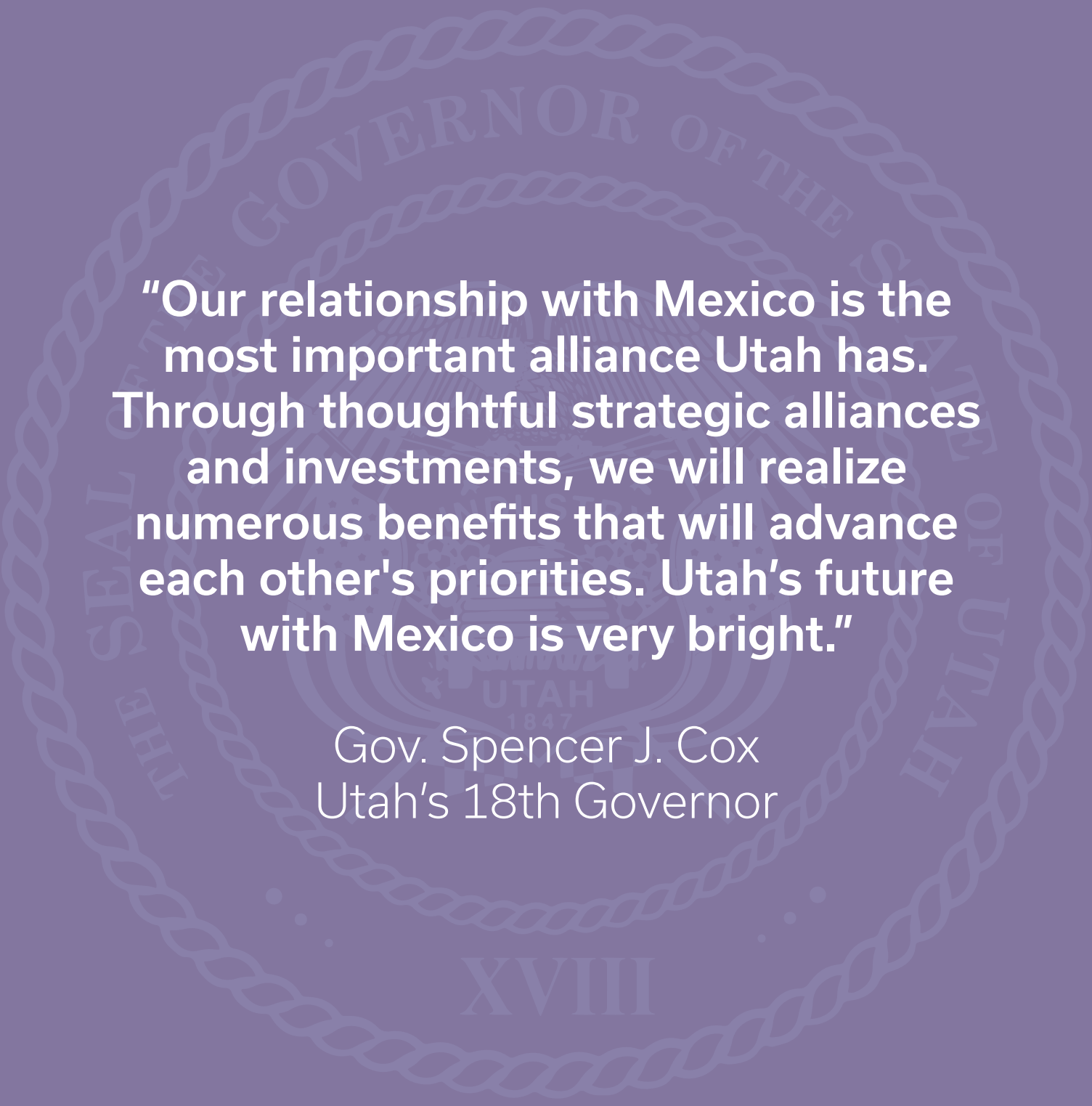


Utah Governor's Office of  
Economic Opportunity

Joint  
Utah  
Mexico  
Partnership





The background features a large, faint, circular seal of the Governor of the State of Utah. The seal has a braided border and contains the text "GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF UTAH" at the top and "XVIII" at the bottom. In the center of the seal is a smaller emblem with the word "UTAH" and the year "1847".

**"Our relationship with Mexico is the most important alliance Utah has. Through thoughtful strategic alliances and investments, we will realize numerous benefits that will advance each other's priorities. Utah's future with Mexico is very bright."**

Gov. Spencer J. Cox  
Utah's 18th Governor

# Table of Contents

Letter from Executive Director	3
Introduction	4
Key Recommendations	6
Business and Trade	7
Workforce and Talent	9
Foreign Language Acquisition	11
Culture and Belonging	12
Statistics	14
JUMP Committee	16



# Letter From Executive Director

**August 2023**

As Gov. Cox says, our relationship with Mexico is Utah and the United States' most important alliance.

International connections and working relationships are vital in our mid-sized state where more than 15% of Utahns self-classify as Latino and one-third of the state's workforce speaks a second language.

As a crossroads, Utah's freeways, railways, and direct flights connect freight, business, and personal travelers, including five direct flights to Mexico City.

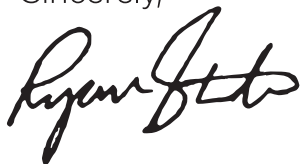
Utah has been the fastest-growing state for the past decade<sup>1</sup>, and its Wasatch Front tracks in at 8.6% population growth for the past five years.<sup>2</sup> The state boasts a solid AAA rating from all credit rating agencies since the creation of the rating system. Utah's unemployment continues to be one of the lowest in the country. The Utah Legislature balances the state's budget and sets money aside annually in a rainy day fund. You'd be hard-pressed to find someplace better fiscally managed and more friendly to business.

Latino businesses are booming in Utah. They've played a crucial role in driving economic growth and creating jobs. By starting and operating businesses, they have contributed to the state's gross domestic product, increased tax revenues, and provided employment opportunities for Latinos and non-Latinos.

Gov. Cox speaks Spanish, and so do I. We intend to strengthen Utah's ties and partnerships with Mexico for the good of Utahns and Mexicans.

This document outlines some ways and recommendations the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity believes we can enhance our Joint Utah-Mexico Partnership (JUMP).

Sincerely,



Ryan Starks  
Executive Director  
Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census, 2020

<sup>2</sup> [Site data from EDCU/KCGPI]

# Introduction

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## Why Utah + Mexico?

The United States is Mexico's most important trading partner, and U.S.-based companies account for more than half of Mexico's foreign investment. The United States provides between two-fifths and one-half of Mexican imports and is the destination for some four-fifths of the country's exports.

## Strategic Partnership Opportunities

Several partnerships could strengthen connections between Mexico and Utah. Here are a few types of potential strategic partnership opportunities.

### Job Creation and Economic Growth

Strengthening economic ties between Utah and Mexico will create new job opportunities and drive economic growth. Increased trade and investment can lead to establishing new businesses, expanding existing ones, and developing industries in both regions. This collaboration can create more jobs for people in Utah and Mexico, positively impacting their respective economies.

### Trade and Investment

Collaborative partnerships can enhance trade and investment between Utah and Mexico. They can facilitate the exchange of goods, services, and investments, leading to increased economic activity and business growth. Such partnerships can help Utah businesses expand their markets by tapping into Mexico's large consumer base and supply chains.

### Knowledge and Technology Sharing

Collaboration in research and development, innovation, and technology transfer can benefit industries in both regions. It can foster the exchange of best practices, encourage innovation, and promote the development of new industries and technologies.

### Enhanced Education and Workforce Development

Utah and Mexico can collaborate on academic exchanges, research partnerships, and vocational training programs. Utah's work in this area can help develop a skilled workforce in various sectors, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthen educational institutions in both regions.

## Cultural Exchange and Tourism

Cultural exchange and tourism between Utah and Mexico can lead to greater understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures, traditions, and heritage. Our partnership can help attract tourists from both regions, contributing to the growth of the tourism sector and promoting cultural diversity.

## Infrastructure Development

Strategic partnerships can support infrastructure development projects. Collaborating on infrastructure initiatives such as transportation networks, logistics hubs, and education and work visas can improve connectivity between Utah and Mexico. Enhanced infrastructure can facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people, making trade and business operations more efficient and cost-effective.

## Sustainable Development and Environmental Cooperation

Utah and Mexico can work together to address common environmental challenges, promote renewable energy projects, and implement sustainable practices in various industries. Our work here can contribute to a greener economy, reduce environmental impacts, and foster a shared commitment to environmental stewardship.

**"The historical ties between Mexico and Utah, which date over 110 years, has resulted in a strong and unique relationship that has stolid economic, cultural, trade and people-to-people components. These ties are the basis for launching the Joint Utah-Mexico Partnership (JUMP), which seeks to engage all interested parties on a permanent commitment to make the most of this strategic relationship that benefits our economies and peoples. I am convinced that we have a bright future ahead working together."**

Eduardo Baca, Consul of Mexico in Salt Lake City

# Key Recommendations

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## **Business and Trade**

Promote targeted, collaborative international business and trade events focused on Utah's targeted industries and selected industrial sectors in Mexico.

Facilitate international trade missions to foster increased collaboration. Develop a strategy to facilitate diplomatic trade relationships with the Mexican federal government, the governments of the Mexican States, and Mexican nongovernmental organizations.

## **Workforce and Talent**

Build bridges between Utah's targeted industries and Mexico's centers of excellence.

Provide technical expertise on employment-based visa pathways for Mexican nationals.

Amplify opportunities for Mexican nationals living in Utah to connect with employers and industry partners.

## **Foreign Language Acquisition**

Continue promoting the value of language education and encourage students and residents to prioritize language learning.

Ensure Utah schools, colleges, and universities offer diverse language programs, particularly for underserved languages and cultures.

Help coordinate nonprofit support and services for Spanish speakers in Utah.

## **Culture and Belonging**

Amplify awareness of Mexican cultural celebrations.

Facilitate cultural exchanges and partnerships.

Promote bilateral tourism.

## Background

Mexico and Utah have a robust and growing trade relationship. Mexico is Utah's largest import market and third-largest export market. In 2022, Utah imported \$4.6 billion worth of goods from Mexico and exported \$1.1 billion. While imports far outweigh exports, there has been a 49% increase in exports since 2018 (U.S. Trade Census). Vital to the Utah economy, trade with Mexico supports over 51,000 jobs in the state (Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, "Utah"). As part of Utah's efforts to further promote trade and diplomatic relations, there have been four trade missions to Mexico in the past decade. Gov. Cox will lead his administration's second trade mission to Mexico in October 2023.

Access to capital is a barrier to Utah Latino Entrepreneurs, which follows the national trend. According to Stanford University's State of Latino Entrepreneurship Report, 70% of business startup costs for Latino Businesses are paid out-of-pocket from personal savings. In comparison, only 6% of startup costs are paid by funds obtained through commercial loans. Utah statistics for these businesses mirror the national trend. Stanford University estimates that if Latino companies were to improve their access to capital and other resources, they could contribute an additional \$1.4 trillion to the U.S. economy.

## Recommendation 1

Promote targeted, collaborative international business and trade events focused on Utah's targeted industries and selected industrial sectors in Mexico.

Support focused, cooperative international business gatherings such as roundtable discussions, conferences, trade shows, expos, and business summits highlighting Utah and Mexican industry clusters for enhanced economic growth and bilateral partnerships.

## Recommendation 2

Facilitate international trade missions to foster increased collaboration.

Implement regular, industry-specific international trade missions to Mexico to promote meaningful business relationships, expand market access, identify new partners, and target opportunities for joint ventures, technology transfer, research collaborations, and research projects.



### Recommendation 3

Develop a strategy to facilitate diplomatic trade relationships with the Mexican federal government, the governments of the Mexican States, and Mexican NGOs.

Formulate three-and five-year comprehensive strategies that include engaging with the Mexican federal government, Mexican state governments, and NGOs to foster strong trade relationships through open communication, cooperation, and the establishment of formal and informal partnerships that promote economic growth and social development.



## Background

The United States provides many employment opportunities for Mexican nationals, as they constitute a significant portion of the immigrant workforce accounting for 24% of the foreign-born population in the U.S. According to the Migration Policy Institute, the number of Mexican nationals immigrating to the U.S. has declined and is no longer the top country of origin. Recent arrivals are more likely to be college graduates than those who arrived in prior decades.

In Utah, Mexican nationals make up a significant part of the population. The American Immigration Council reports that Mexican immigrants account for nearly 40% of the foreign-born population, making it the largest ethnic group in the region. According to the Utah Department of Workforce Services, Mexican nationals in the state are engaged in construction, manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, transportation and logistics, healthcare, and other services. The workforce participation rates for Mexicans residing in the state are higher than their U.S.-born counterparts. Mexican nationals contribute significantly to Utah's economy and communities.

Utah has innovated workforce development programs and has led nationally with recent changes to licensing internationally trained professionals. Utah recognizes an underutilization of employment-based visa programs like the temporary North American Free Trade Agreement (TN) program, making it prime for strategic investments and engagement around workforce innovations.

## Recommendation 1

Build bridges between Utah's targeted industries and Mexico's centers of excellence.

Build bridges where professionals want to come to the U.S. to gain work experience in specific sectors like healthcare by developing centers of excellence throughout Mexico for targeted industries and educated/trained professionals to build bridges with Utah employers and the Mexican workforce.

## Recommendation 2

Provide technical expertise on employment-based visa pathways for Mexican nationals.

Identify partners from the talent recruitment sector with expertise in employment-based visa pathways, specializing in the TN Visa program, to provide technical assistance to Utah businesses and industries recruiting foreign nationals from Mexico, emphasizing industries and sectors experiencing the highest labor shortages like healthcare, engineering, and hospitality.

### Recommendation 3

Amplify opportunities for Mexican nationals living in Utah to connect with employers and industry partners.

Launch a messaging campaign and host networking events to amplify opportunities for Mexican nationals living in Utah to connect with employers and industry partners that align with workforce and licensing pathways to better understand the specific barriers to career advancement and the participation rates in the numerous workforce and skill development programs in the state.





# Foreign Language Acquisition

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## Background

According to a June 2022 report from the Utah Department of Health and Human Resources, English (84.7%), Spanish (10.3%), and Chinese (0.6%) are the top three languages spoken in the Beehive State. The Utah State Board of Education approved a K-12 world language core curriculum, including language proficiency and cultural understanding standards. The state has also implemented a dual-language immersion program in which students receive instruction in a second language starting in kindergarten or first grade.

Utah has a high demand for foreign language education due to its diverse population. The state is home to many immigrants, international students, and tourists, making foreign language proficiency a valuable skill. Returned service missionaries with experience living in Spanish-speaking countries bring those language skills to Utah communities and businesses and the cultural awareness that living in other countries brings.

Programs implemented between Utah School Districts and the Ministry of Education of Mexico enable certified teachers to teach in Utah schools for three years, strengthening foreign language programs and cultural sensitivity.

## Recommendation 1

Continue promoting the value of language education and encourage students and residents to prioritize language learning.

A global economy requires communicating and understanding cultures around the world. Utah can lead the way in cultural awareness and business communication across country lines.

## Recommendation 2

Ensure Utah schools, colleges, and universities offer diverse language programs, particularly for underserved languages and cultures.

Find ways to encourage and incentivize the state's learning institutions to incorporate language programs. Consider additional funding.

## Recommendation 3

Help coordinate nonprofit support and services for Spanish speakers in Utah.

Look for opportunities to curate and share resources across churches, community organizations, and nonprofits. Consider funding sources.



# Culture and Belonging

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## Background

With nearly 500,000 Utahns of Hispanic or Latino descent, this group is our state's second-largest racial and ethnic population. As we promote culture and belonging, we can celebrate Mexican-American heritage in a two-fold approach: preserving the culture and language of the Mexican community and supporting cross-cultural collaboration with the broader community.

Organizations, including the Mexican Consulate in Salt Lake City, work together to host public events celebrating Mexican culture across the state. The Consulate and its partners also support the well-being and integration of Mexican residents by offering resources in financial management, education, healthcare, legal services, and labor, among others.

## Recommendation 1

Amplify awareness of Mexican cultural celebrations.

Support annual Mexican cultural festivals and events that showcase Mexico's diverse traditions, arts, music, dance, and cuisine. These celebrations are open to the public and held in collaboration with local communities, fostering cross-cultural exchange and appreciation. Cities and state agencies are encouraged to broadcast these events whenever possible to increase participation among the wider community. In addition, we recommend the Utah Department of Community and Cultural Engagement help promote these events.

## Recommendation 2

Facilitate cultural exchanges and partnerships.

Support Utah cultural institutions as they partner with Mexican counterparts. Such partnerships should result in cultural exchanges, such as artist residencies, student exchange programs, and event collaboration. We recommend the state support these collaborations through microgrants and legislative funding.

## Recommendation 3

Promote bilateral tourism.

Utah and Mexico have never been so well-connected. With Salt Lake City airport's five direct flights to Mexico, and Provo Airport's upcoming expansion, tourism between Utah and Mexico is the most accessible it has ever been. Bilateral tourism improves both economies. In 2021, Mexicans spent \$10.1 million in the Utah economy, remaining in the top five of the inbound visitor economy. While the Utah Office of Tourism already promotes tourism between these markets,

additional promotion could be achieved by:

Hiring a vendor to represent Mexico's travel trade, PR, and other marketing efforts.

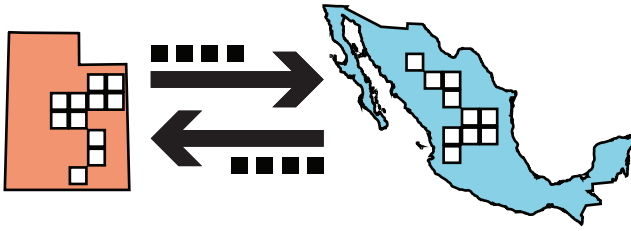
Collaborating with the Salt Lake City International Airport for flight expansion.

Pitching and hosting journalists for earned media opportunities.

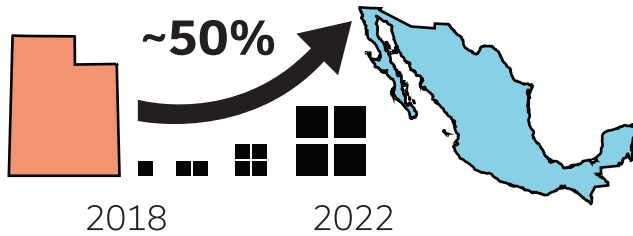


# Statistics

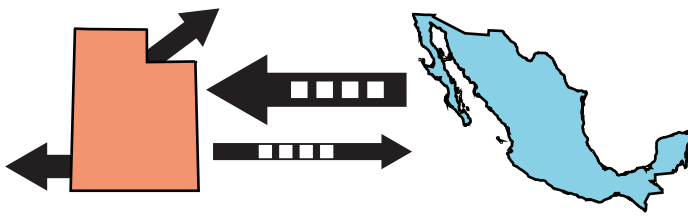
## EXPORTS & IMPORTS



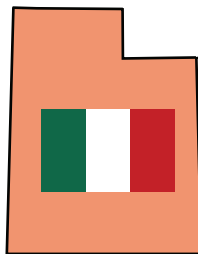
**Total Imports & Exports  
in 2022 \$5.6 Billion  
(U.S. Census Bureau)**



**Exports to Mexico  
increased ~50%  
from 2018–2022  
(U.S. Census Bureau)**



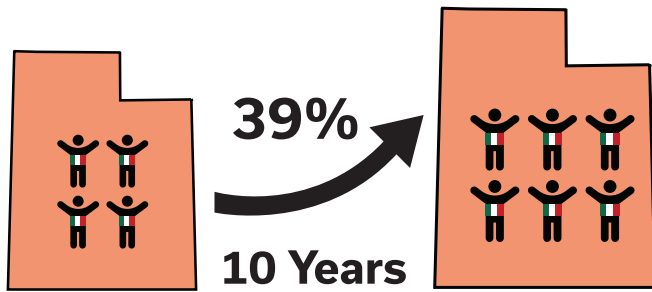
**Mexico is Utah's  
Largest Import Partner and  
3<sup>rd</sup> Largest Export Partner  
(U.S. Census Bureau)**



**With nearly half a million Utahns,  
the Hispanic population is Utah's  
second-largest ethnic population  
(Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute)**



**In Salt Lake County, 1 in 5 people  
are of Hispanic or Latino descent  
(Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute)**



Over the next 10 years, Utah's Hispanic population could increase by 39% (Deseret News)



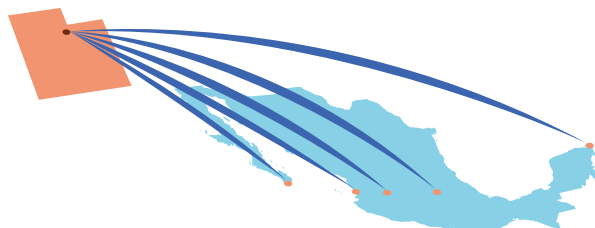
Trade with Mexico supports more than 51,000 Utah jobs (Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, "Utah")



The Mexican Consulate in Salt Lake City has existed for 111 years (Hinckley Institute of Politics)



The Utah Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has existed for 31 years, has 605 members, and has helped 3,518 businesses (Hispanic Chamber)



SLC has direct flights to Cancun (4.5 hours), Mexico City (4 hours), Guadalajara (4 hours), Cabo San Lucas (3 hours), and Puerto Vallarta (3.5 hours)



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**Utah Governor's Office of  
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Joint Utah  
Mexico Partnership

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