

## CyberMontana

# Securing Communities. Building Cyber Talent.

### CUSTOMER

CyberMontana

### INDUSTRY

Montana state-funded  
cybersecurity non-profit

### FOCUS AREAS

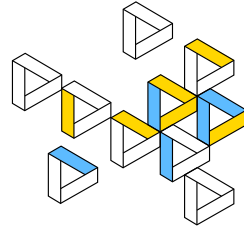
Cybersecurity services and  
workforce development

### CHALLENGE

Address underserved  
communities and facilitate a  
cyber workforce talent pipeline

### GOAL

Engage residents across all  
of Montana's 56 counties



“ We don't just need graduates. We need people who have actually worked alerts, seen real data, and understand how decisions get made in a SOC.”



**JONATHAN NEFF**  
CISO AND CYBERMONTANA ADVISOR

## Where Cybersecurity Meets Community Need

When cybersecurity conversations turn to talent shortages, the discussion often centers on large enterprises and urban hubs. Montana presents a different reality. Vast geographic areas, small populations, and limited IT resources are exposed to the same cyber threats as major institutions.

CyberMontana was created to meet that reality. Launched as a state-funded cybersecurity center at the University of Montana, CyberMontana blends public service with workforce development, protecting communities while building the next generation of cybersecurity professionals.

Rather than treating education, operations, and workforce readiness separately, CyberMontana connects them into a model designed for scale, transparency, and real-world impact.

## The Challenge: High Stakes, Limited Resources

Across Montana, counties, tribal governments, public utilities, and municipalities operate critical infrastructure with little or no dedicated cybersecurity staff. These organizations manage sensitive data, public safety systems, and essential services but often lack resources to respond effectively.

As Victor Valgenti, cybersecurity educator and early contributor to CyberMontana, explains, the challenge is not just technical: “The goal isn't to produce specialists who only understand tools. It's to help people think clearly about risk in environments that are messy, constrained, and real.”

Montana also faces a talent challenge. With a small population and out-migration of young professionals, the state seeks to develop cybersecurity expertise and opportunities. CyberMontana was designed to strengthen security for communities while creating a pipeline of job-ready talent.

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**VIC VALGENTI**  
CYBERMONTANA ADVISOR

## WHY EMBED



### Agentic AI built by practitioners

Mirrors how real analysts investigate threats



### Designed to amplify

Human analysts



### iSteps™ Transparency

Helps analysts (and students) learn



### Platform approach

Enables highly trained investigations



Embed's agentic security platform delivers intelligent automation and transparent investigation capabilities across your entire attack surface. Whether you're triaging alerts, defending your cloud infrastructure, or securing endpoints, Embed empowers your team to move faster—with confidence.

## Workforce Development by Design

Workforce development has been central to CyberMontana's mission. State leaders recognized that long-term cyber resilience depends on local expertise.

Jonathan Neff, CISO at the University of Montana and an advisor to CyberMontana, describes the intent clearly: "We don't just need graduates. We need people who have actually worked alerts, seen real data, and understand how decisions get made in a SOC."

CyberMontana supports a deliberate pipeline through academic foundations and experiential learning to drive operational readiness.

## Real Operations, Real Outcomes

CyberMontana operates an early-stage SOC that provides limited monitoring services for participating organizations. Students, supervised by experienced staff, analyze network telemetry and alerts generated from sensors deployed in local government and utility environments.

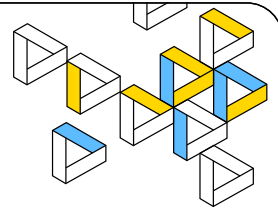
The work is not theoretical. In one instance, CyberMontana analysts identified a rogue device embedded within a public utility network through the program's monitoring. The finding was escalated, investigated, and resolved.

For communities, even modest visibility can make a meaningful difference. For students, these moments transform classroom knowledge into operational confidence.

### The Impact

CyberMontana's model delivers value across multiple dimensions:

- ✓ Underserved communities gain access to cybersecurity support they would otherwise lack.
- ✓ Students graduate with real operational experience and confidence.
- ✓ Employers gain entry-level professionals who understand tools, workflows, and security reasoning.
- ✓ The state strengthens cyber resilience while investing in a local workforce.



## The Future

CyberMontana operates with advisory oversight from University of Montana leadership, including the university's CISO and CIO. This ensures alignment with modern security practices while preserving the program's independence and public-service mission.

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in cybersecurity operations, CyberMontana and UM programs have taken a clear stance: AI should augment human judgment, not replace it.

By combining academic rigor, experiential learning, explainable AI, and state-funded public service, CyberMontana demonstrates that effective cybersecurity programs need not choose between protection and education.

They can, and should, do both.