

2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



**HEARTLAND
FORWARD**

AN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RENEWAL

We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit “think and do tank” focused on improving the economic performance in the center of the United States by advocating for fact-based solutions to foster job creation, knowledge-based and inclusive growth, and improved health outcomes.

Heartland Forward is based in Bentonville, Arkansas, but our work focuses on the entire Heartland region which is comprised of 20 states.

Our four pillars of focus are:



Innovation and entrepreneurship



Human capital and workforce development



Health and wellness

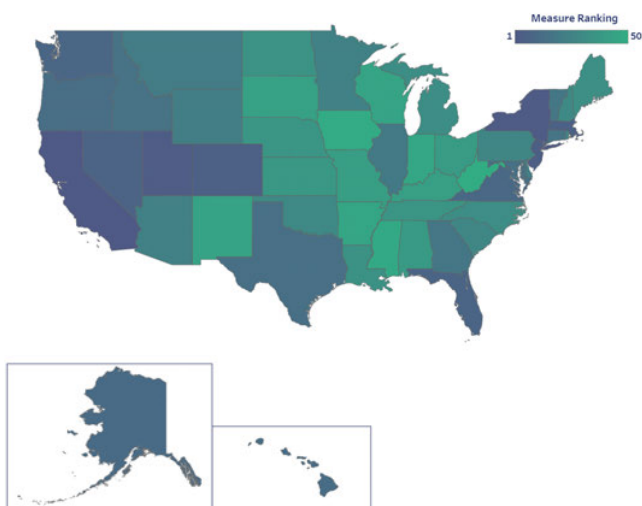


Regional competitiveness

Which States Do the Best Job Supporting Entrepreneurs?

No surprises here: Which states do the best job supporting entrepreneurs, those businesses that are six years and younger? That's the question we answer in our latest report, America's Entrepreneurial States, released on October 26. The report shows that the states on the coasts prevail and the heartland states lag. The only three states in the top 25 in the heartland are Texas, Illinois and Minnesota. [Read here.](#)

Interactive calculator: In addition to the report, the research team, specifically Jonas Crews, research economist, developed an interactive calculator to help states experiment and determine ranking changes based on the characteristics the report used - risk capital, internet access and educational attainment. To interact with the calculator, [click here.](#)



The **Chicago Tribune** published an op-ed by Ross DeVol, which outlines steps policymakers can take to spur entrepreneurship.

What's ahead for research in 2022: There is a lot planned for this next year. Here's a glimpse.

Research Briefs

- Outdoor Recreation as Economic Development: Growing from Tourism to Advanced Manufacturing

Research Projects by Topic

- Broadband Affordability & Guidebook
- Most Dynamic Metros
- Connected Labor force
 - Part 1: Launch early 2022
 - Part 2: deep dive into regional and occupational differences, will be early Spring 2022
- America's Entrepreneurial Metros
- Addressing Health Care Workforce Needs in Growing Metros
- Talent in the heartland relative to metros throughout US
- Analysis on university technology transfer activities

Chicago Tribune

OCT. 27, 2021



OP-ED: HOW BOTH CHICAGO AND ILLINOIS CAN BETTER ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

By Ross DeVol

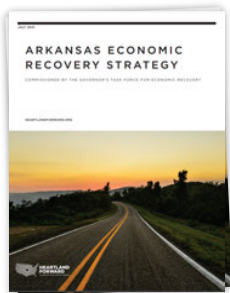
Heartland Forward 2021 Research



Heartland of Opportunity



The Emergence of
the Global Heartland



Arkansas Economic
Recovery Strategy

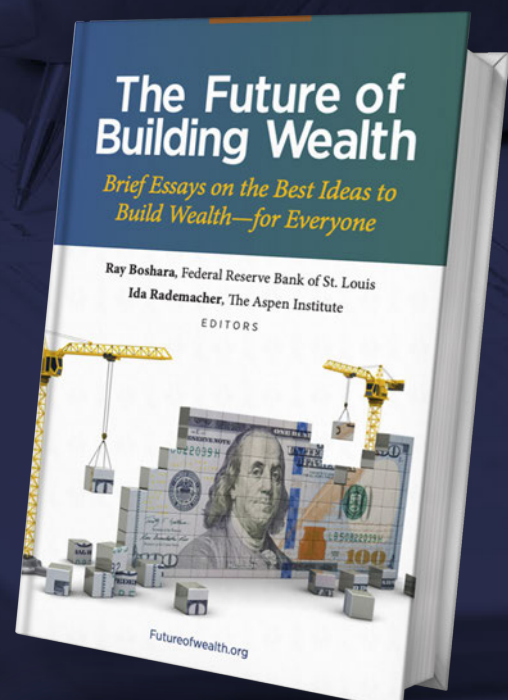


Reshoring America

What is the Future of Wealth?

What's it gonna take: President and CEO of Heartland Forward Ross DeVol and Chief Research Officer Dave Shideler submitted an essay providing policymakers with tools for economic growth across America. This work is being featured in the book published by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and the Aspen Institute Financial Security Program called The Future of Building Wealth: Brief Essays on the Best Ideas to Build Wealth—for Everyone.

The bottom line: This focuses on building an inclusive financial system for all by reducing wealth inequality. Don't be surprised when you read the article from DeVol and Shideler and see their emphasis on entrepreneurship and access to high-speed internet as important factors for financial inclusivity.



Connecting the Heartland

Seizing This Historic Moment to Close the Digital Divide

Connecting the Heartland is a multi-tiered, multi-year initiative of Heartland Forward, launched in April 2021, dedicated to boosting affordable, high-speed internet access and adoption throughout America's heartland. We believe that when people have high-speed internet access, doors open to them — to everything from healthcare, employment, education and so much more. To grow and strengthen heartland communities, it's vital to start with a reliable, fast internet connection.

American Connection Corps Fellows:

Ten young leaders supported by Heartland Forward were selected and are working on the ground in Arkansas, Tennessee, Ohio and Illinois to help assist with the adoptability and affordability of high-speed internet.

In the first quarter of their fellowships, these young leaders have accomplished a great deal. To highlight the impact from just a few of our fellows:



Mary Gay (working with the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois) is spearheading a grant “war room” for high-speed internet expansion funding opportunities and compiled a list of the grants — worth **over \$50 million** (read more [here](#)).



Maddie Long (working with Mayor Frank Scott Jr.'s office) created a paid media campaign (that Heartland Forward [sponsored](#)) and community outreach initiative to enroll Little Rock residents in the Emergency Broadband Benefit program — the city saw **over 900 people** enroll in just one month.



Carly Fitz (working with the Buckeye Hills Regional Council) helped contribute to **9,450 new applications** for the broadband residential grant program in Perry County, OH.

Connecting the Heartland Workshop Series:

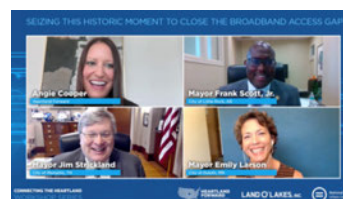
We created the Connecting the Heartland Workshop series to convene decision-makers and influencers from Washington with problem-solvers and doers in the heartland, in an effort to improve coordination and to maximize the impact of new federal funding programs.

Our topics included:

Workshop #1: Closing the affordability gap from the beltway to the heartland

Workshop #2: Closing the adoption gap and promoting digital equity

Workshop #3: Seizing the historic moment to close the broadband access gap



Our speakers included:



Roy Copper
North Carolina
Governor



Jessica Rosenworcel
FCC Chair

Three prominent heartland mayors, two state broadband directors and dozens of other experts and leaders in the space.


300+ connectivity leaders and stakeholders from across the country attended.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Awareness Campaign:

 **223,700+** new enrollments

Over the course of our campaign, we saw an increase of 223,700+ new enrollments across AR, IL, OH and TN.

For the overall campaign:

 **70+** media hits
20+ million people

 **24+** million advertising impressions
 **500+** librarians trained

After the Signing of the Federal Infrastructure Package, Heartland Forward Lept into Action

4 Principles to Maximize Impact

01 Public investments in high-speed internet should lift everyone up

02 Communities should drive solutions that meet their own unique needs

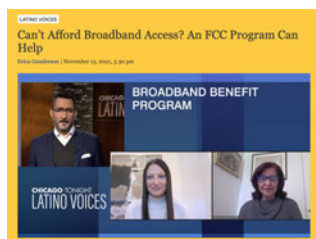
03 Regulations and standards should maximize today's investment for long-term impact

04 Access to high-speed internet will positively impact our economy



Four Principles to Maximize the Impact of Federal Spending on Connectivity in the Heartland

November 16, 2021
Author: Angie Cooper



Angie Cooper, chief program officer of Heartland Forward and **Caroline Sanchez Crozier**, National Innovation and Technology Committee Chair at LULAC discuss the partnership and how to sign up for EBB to close the [#digitaldivide](#) on [PBS' Latino voices](#).

Supporting Local Governments as They Navigate How to Deploy the Funds

Heartland Forward partnered with Governor JB Pritzker, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Development and the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society on the Accelerate Illinois initiative to help communities throughout Illinois leverage federal funds for community-driven broadband expansion.

With the influx of federal funding, the state of Illinois is prepared to help local governments allocate these resources to close the digital divide in communities.



Partnership

Connecting the Heartland Teams up with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to enroll communities in the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) and FCC's new program that will launch December 31, 2021



LEAGUE of UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS

Heartland Forward is excited to launch our partnership with LULAC to help enroll Latinx communities in the heartland in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.

Bloomberg Law®

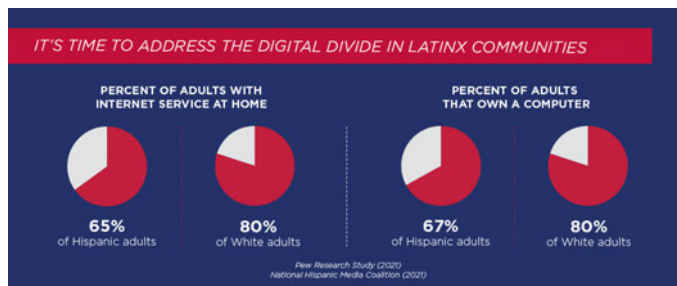
Privacy & Data Security Law

Nonprofits Partner to Enroll Latinos in FCC Broadband Program

“Heartland Forward and the League of United Latin American Citizens on Thursday announced they will partner to help Latinos sign up for a Federal Communications Commission broadband benefit program as enrollment lags.”

Why It Matters:

- It's estimated that [42 million Americans](#) do not have the internet service they need to be connected to life in the 21st century.
- This problem is particularly acute within the Latino community. According to a 2021 [Pew Research Study](#), only 67% of Hispanic adults reported owning a computer, compared to 80% of white adults, and only 65% said they have internet service at home, compared to 80% of white adults.
- The central feature of this collaboration is **\$50,000 in funding from Heartland Forward to support LULAC local councils across the heartland** in on-the-ground outreach and enrollment efforts.



The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a key aid to making internet and devices affordable, but enrollment by Latinx households lags behind the general population.

LULAC and Heartland Forward are teaming up to encourage Latinx communities to access the Emergency Broadband Benefit so we can have true digital equity and the many economic and social opportunities that it brings.



1,000 Builders in the Heartland by 2023

We're expanding the Community Growth Program and Toolkit

Community Impact Event: On September 29, Heartland Forward, joined by partners Builders + Backers and Accenture, announced the expansion of the Community Growth Program and Toolkit (CGPT), a first-of-its-kind idea accelerator, Pebble Fund and "Buildership™" program.

This announcement was made at Heartland Forward's first Impact Event with a program line-up of esteemed leaders including **Alejandra Castillo, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development**, Alana Beard, former WNBA player turned entrepreneur and our partners in Oxford, MS, and Tulsa, OK.

Zoom In: After a successful launch in Tulsa, OK and Oxford, MS with a total of 15 Builders, Heartland Forward is supporting with the help of its partners – to raise \$4 million to expand the program to 1,000 builders across the heartland by 2023.

- Program video, watch [HERE](#).
- Meet our Builders, watch [HERE](#).
- Community Impact Event Highlights, watch [HERE](#).

Measures of Success for Tulsa, OK + Oxford, MS:

- There was a 100% retention rate
- The majority of Builders were women and BIPOC

Learn more about the program and how to apply [HERE](#).



Up NEXT: Applications Launched for the 2022 Winter Cohort in Tulsa, Oxford, Oklahoma City and Iowa City!

Interested builders can apply via:

<https://www.buildersandbackers.com/idea-accelerator>

Stay tuned for more communities coming online in 2022!

Let's Give 'em Something to Talk About

Over the past year Heartland Forward has secured media coverage in high-profile national and local publications with thousands of stories placed across the country.

Bloomberg

The New York Times

Times of
Entrepreneurship

AXIOS

POLITICO

Twitter Engagement in 2021



2,624,716 Impressions



468 Tweets



43,442 Profile Visits



717 Mentions



527 New Followers

Heartland Happenings



7,418

Total Recipients

Giving Tuesday

This year we launched our first #GivingTuesday campaign to participate in the global generosity movement and engage our followers in our work. We thank all of our supporters for their contributions, which helped us secure thousands of dollars in donations!



Home is where the  is.

GIVING
TUESDAY



HEARTLAND
FORWARD

It's official: *Meet us in the Middle* is a Podcast Series

Our podcast series *Meet us in the Middle* is where we dive into deep conversations with some of the most interesting people in the heartland who are striving each day to use their ingenuity and creativity to impact the middle of the country. Come join us as we Meet in the Middle. You can find us on  Spotify and  iTunes.



PODCAST

Meet Us in the Middle

HeartlandForward

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• Meet Us in the Middle: A Conversation with John Palfrey

On this episode of Meet Us in the Middle Angie Cooper sits down for a conversation with John Palfrey, President of the MacArthur Foundation in Chicago.



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