

Talent Pipeline | Skilled Workforce

Building Pathways to Skilled Careers

Heartland Forward connects students, educators, employers and communities to create clear, local pathways from high school into skilled trades careers through hands-on exposure and direct connections to real jobs.

From Education to Employment

- Heartland Forward partners **communities, policymakers, education leaders** and **employers** to align existing efforts into **practical, employer-aligned skilled trades pathways** that reflect real local workforce demand and create clear on ramps into essential careers.
- Our approach prioritizes **hands-on learning, local ownership** and **direct engagement** between **education** and **industry** to ensure students understand what careers are available in their communities and how to access them.
- This work builds upon [rootEd Arkansas](#), which places dedicated college and career advisors in rural high schools across the state to work with each student as they define and plan for their futures. Together, these efforts help students connect early to local skilled career opportunities and understand clear pathways into the workforce after graduation.



Intentional Exposure

We coordinate hands-on, local experiences across industries to turn career awareness into career readiness.



Clear Pathways

We make it clear how to enter, progress and advance in careers using local pathways that directly translate from education to real jobs.



Connected Systems

We coordinate and connect among local education, industry, public policy and economic development to grow opportunities and improve outcomes.

Invest in a Stronger Workforce

Together, we can advance economic opportunity across the heartland. To learn more about opportunities to invest in Heartland Forward's Skilled Workforce initiatives, programs and research contact abby@heartlandforward.org.

ABOUT HEARTLAND FORWARD

Heartland Forward is a non-profit, policy think-and-do tank that turns ideas into action for states and local communities. Our mission is to accelerate economic growth, change the narrative about the middle of the country and generate \$500 million of economic impact to the heartland by 2030. We do this through applied research, community-driven programs, policy and convenings—focusing on regional competitiveness, talent pipeline and health and wellness.