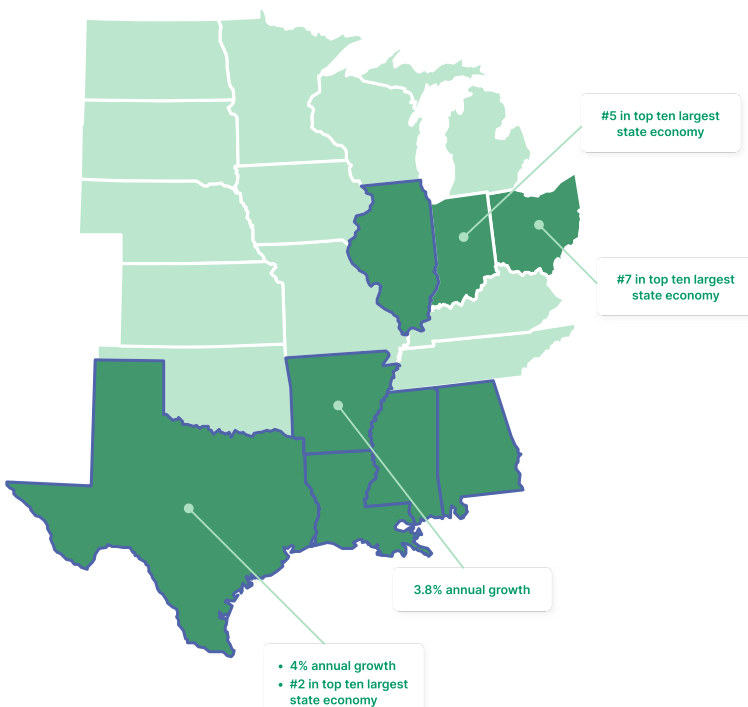
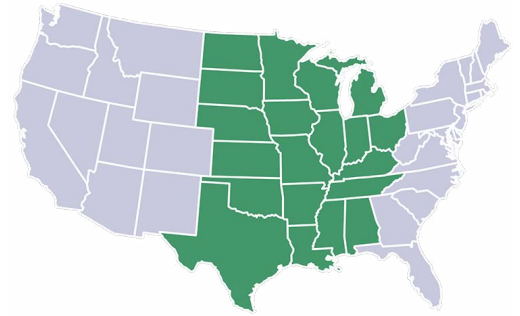


The Heartland Economy

The heartland is a **\$10.4 trillion** economy. It represents more than **one-third (36%)** of the U.S. economy.

Every heartland state economy is growing. Adjusted for inflation, the heartland, as a region, is growing by **2.6% annually**, which is on par with the U.S. growth rate.

In 2024, the heartland economy grew by about \$456 billion. While 2025 numbers have yet to be released by the federal government, private sector estimates indicate that the heartland economy grew by about \$342 billion last year.



- Three of the **top ten largest state economies** are in the heartland – **Texas** (2), **Illinois** (5) and **Ohio** (7). Those three states alone make up nearly \$1 out of every \$5 of the U.S. economy.
- On a percentage basis, **two of the top ten fastest growing state economies** are in the heartland. **Texas** ranks seventh at nearly 4% annually; **Arkansas** is eighth at 3.8%.
- **Six heartland state economies are growing faster than the U.S. economy** – **Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Indiana**.
- **Three of the top ten largest county economies are in the heartland** – Harris County, Texas (3), Cook County, Illinois (4) and Dallas County, Texas (8).
- The heartland is home to many of the fastest growing counties in the country. On a percentage basis and adjusted for inflation, **fourteen of the twenty fastest growing counties nationally are in the heartland**, including places in Illinois, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota and Texas.

Heartland Jobs



According to the latest jobs report for states, heartland employers are adding jobs at a slightly faster pace than all employers nationally.



In January 2026, total **non farm employment in the heartland grew by about 176,000 jobs**, compared to a year ago, accounting for more than half of the net gain in jobs for the entire country.



Four of the five states that added jobs between December 2024 and January 2026 were in the heartland—**Texas, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa**.

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.