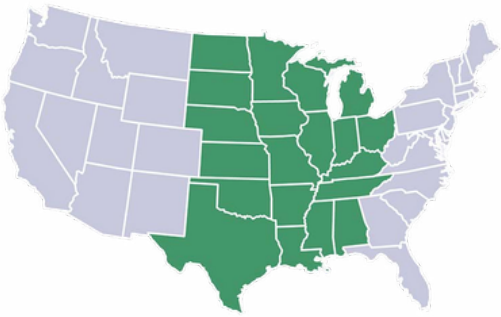
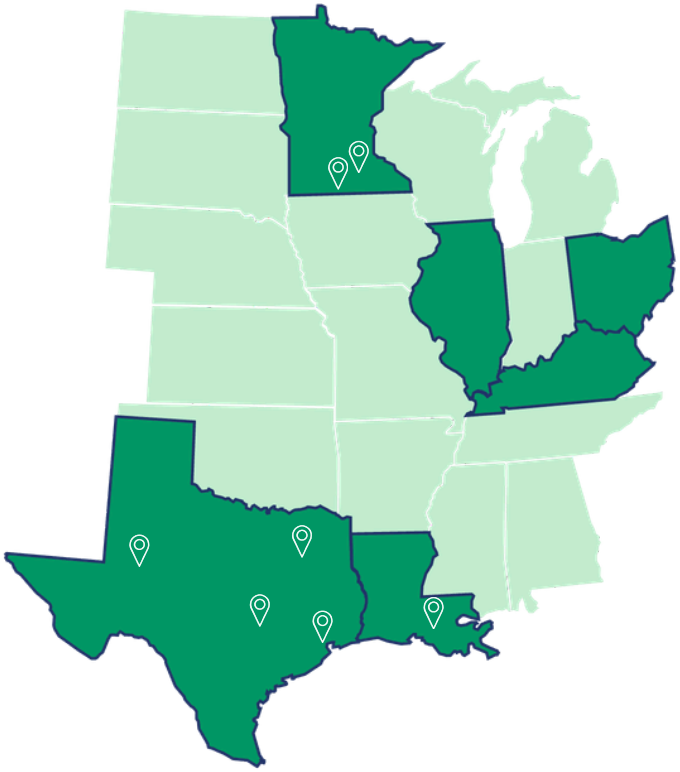
The Heartland Economy

The heartland is an $11 trillion economy. It represents more than one-third (36%) of the U.S. economy.

As of August 2026, more jobs have been created on a year-over-year basis in heartland states than in non-heartland states.





- **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.**
- **As of August 2026, only seven large U.S. metros are growing at 1% or more year-over-year and *four of them are in the heartland:* Minneapolis-St. Paul, Houston, Austin and Dallas-Fort Worth.**
- **Four heartland state economies are growing faster than the U.S. economy – *Kentucky, Texas, Illinois and Ohio.***
- **Ranked by percentage growth, the heartland is home to 9 of the top 25 fastest growing midsize cities in the country and 13 of the top 25 fastest growing small cities in the country.**
- ***All 20 heartland states are growing in population.***

Heartland Jobs

As of August 2026, two heartland states, Louisiana and Minnesota, have been adding jobs on a year-over-year basis at a pace nearly five times the U.S. economy.

As of August 2026, Texas leads the country in the number of net new jobs created on a year-over-year basis, outpacing California by nearly 21,000 jobs.

The heartland is home to the three fastest growing U.S. metros by year-over-year job growth: Mankato, MN, Midland, TX and Baton Rouge, LA.

About Heartland Forward

Heartland Forward is a nonprofit, 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. **Learn more: heartlandforward.org**