rootEd College & Career Advising

A Proven Model for Rural Student Success

Every rural student should graduate high school on a path to career success and economic mobility. rootEd Alliance places dedicated career advisors in rural high schools to work with all students to define and plan their futures, whether through a college degree, career credentials, apprenticeships or military service.

rootEd collaborates with state and local partners like Heartland Forward to implement a model that reflects local priorities, aligns with workforce needs and strengthens regional talent pipelines. To date, rootEd advisors have supported more than 100,000 students across 340 rural high schools in seven states, including Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Texas, Alaska, Illinois and Idaho.

The rootEd Model

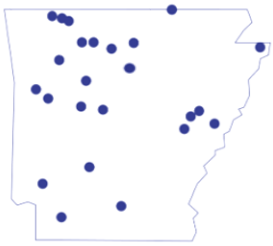
rootEd advisors work alongside school counselors to ensure every senior has a plan after high school:

- Connect students with career exposure opportunities like internships, job shadowing, training and part-time work.
- Help students prepare for and apply to best-fit colleges, career training and apprenticeships.
- Help students identify and apply for financial resources, including scholarships and financial aid.
- Support the transition to college and career, navigating housing, transportation and logistics.

rootEd Arkansas Results

In Arkansas, **rootEd operates as a public-private partnership between Heartland Forward, rootEd Alliance and the Arkansas Department of Education**—a three-year pilot funded by a $1 million annual state investment, matched 1:1 by philanthropy.

For the 2026-27 academic year, rootEd Arkansas serves 2,250 students across 24 rural high schools statewide. The results below reflect the impact of rootEd for rural students in Arkansas and offer a model with strong potential for Kansas.



Schools served by rootEd Arkansas in 2026-27.

72%
of non-college-bound students plan to enter high-growth industries (healthcare, manufacturing, construction).

88%
of rootEd graduates plan to remain in Arkansas after graduation.

66%
more students pursuing education or training over low-wage jobs, vs. the pre-rootEd baseline.

97%
of students participated in industry tours, campus visits, job shadowing or internships.

$9,500+
median wage gain for non-college-bound students, vs. peers without a rootEd advisor.

2x
more financial aid accessed by rootEd Arkansas students vs. the national average.

71% of rootEd seniors completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) compared to 54% of Arkansas seniors statewide.