Center
on Rural
Innovation

Bridging the Divide

A Tech-Based Economic Development Model for Rural America

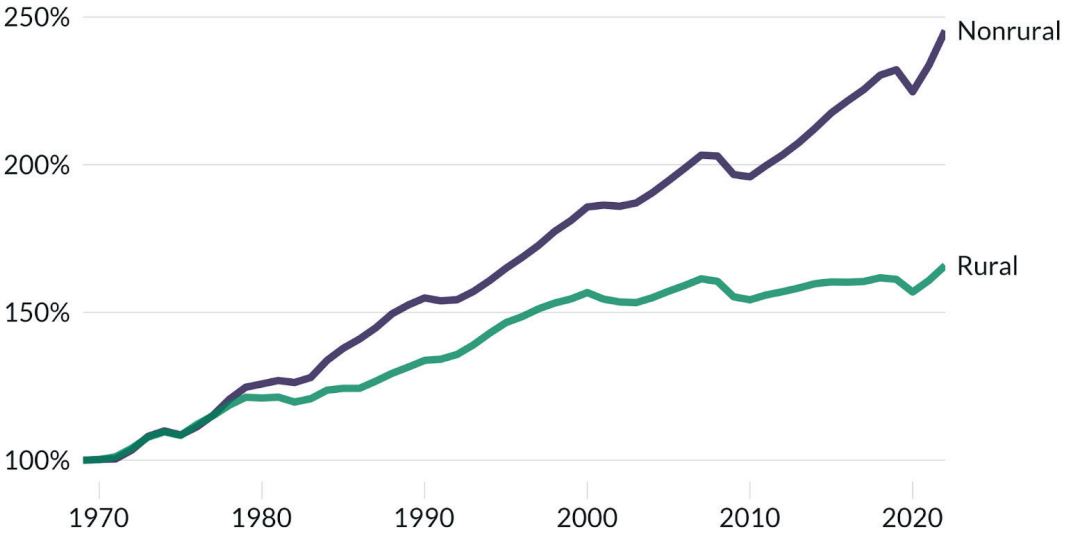
The Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) is leading a national effort to ensure rural communities are full participants in the country's economy.

Grounded in rigorous research and deep partnerships with local leaders, our economic development model helps communities build thriving tech ecosystems from the ground up. With artificial intelligence (AI) accelerating economic change, our nation faces a critical choice. We can repeat the mistakes of the past, where decisions left rural areas without the infrastructure, training, and support to adapt to technological shifts, thereby widening the opportunity gap. ***Or, we can forge a new path—one that intentionally equips rural communities to not only participate in the AI revolution, but to help lead it.***

Economic divides between rural and urban America have been widening for decades. While metropolitan areas rebounded from the Great Recession, rural America has yet to recover. Recessions tend to reinforce underlying economic trends (Weinstein & Patrick, 2020). The economic shift towards service industries, including knowledge economy jobs, has primarily favored large, established cities, which has led to an increase in geographic inequality with richer places becoming richer and poorer places becoming poorer (Eckert, Juneau, & Peters, 2023; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). This divergence has fueled a cascade of crises in rural America, from hospital closures and underfunded public services to rising mortality rates and opioid use (Case and Deaton, 2015; Musse, 2020). Compounding the problem, while nearly 17% of Americans in poverty live in rural areas, just 3% of philanthropic funding goes to rural communities (Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, 2024). This mismatch also overlooks the need for place-based economic development to address poverty; 80% of the nation's persistent-poverty counties are rural (Center on Rural Innovation, 2025).

The widening gap in rural and nonrural employment

Employment relative to 1969 levels



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis
Note: "Rural" refers to the nonmetro definition which includes all nonmetro counties.

The persistence of these economic gaps proves that traditional development strategies are failing rural communities. This report makes the economic case for a new path: a community-driven approach to building inclusive and innovative tech ecosystems from the ground up. By investing in the necessary modern infrastructure, tech talent development, and innovative startups, we can ensure transformative technologies like artificial intelligence expand opportunity rather than deepen divides.

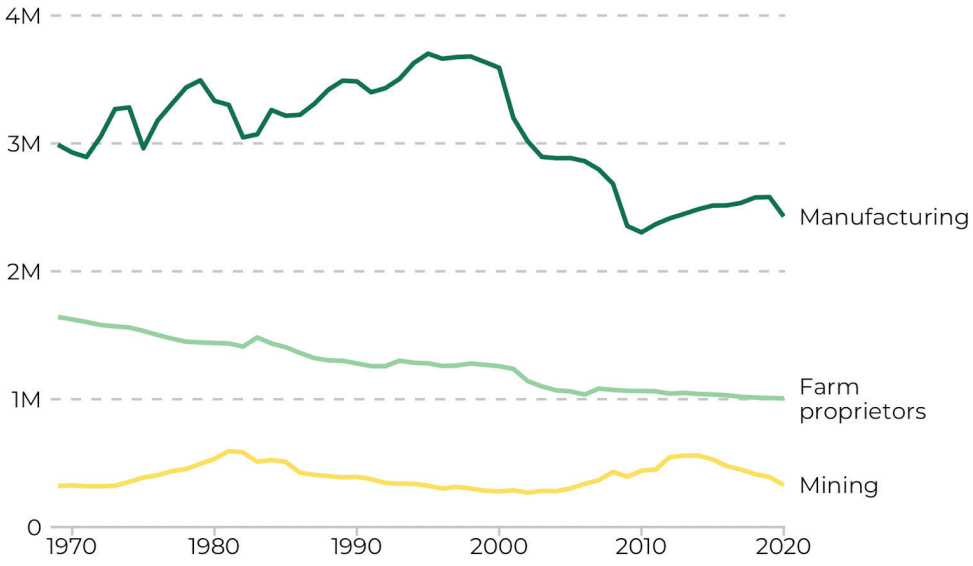
Understanding the Rural Economic Challenge

Our definition of rural shapes our data, our strategy, and our impact.

Rural America faces a core economic challenge: the structural shift in employment away from the industries that once anchored small-town economies—agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. Together, these sectors now account for less than a quarter of rural employment (Center on Rural Innovation, 2024). While many people still view rural America as farming-dependent, most rural areas are no longer farming-dependent, as agriculture accounts for less than 6% of rural jobs (Dumont, 2024). While many rural regions are more likely to be manufacturing-dependent, overreliance on this shrinking sector has limited resilience and long-term growth (Goetz et al. 2018; Kilkenny and Partridge, 2009; Weiler, 2001; Glaeser and Saiz, 2004). Labor-replacing technologies, like automation, that disproportionately negatively affect rural areas have driven much of this decline (Center on Rural Innovation, 2023). Since 2000, automation has accounted for an estimated 88% of manufacturing job losses (Hicks & Devaraj, 2017). Nearly half of all rural jobs are at high risk of automation, leaving rural workers 37% more exposed to displacement than their urban peers, with rural people of color facing the highest risks (Center on Rural Innovation, 2022; 2023). The result has been stark: a 33% drop in rural manufacturing jobs between 1999 and 2020.

Rural employment in key tradable sectors

1969-2020

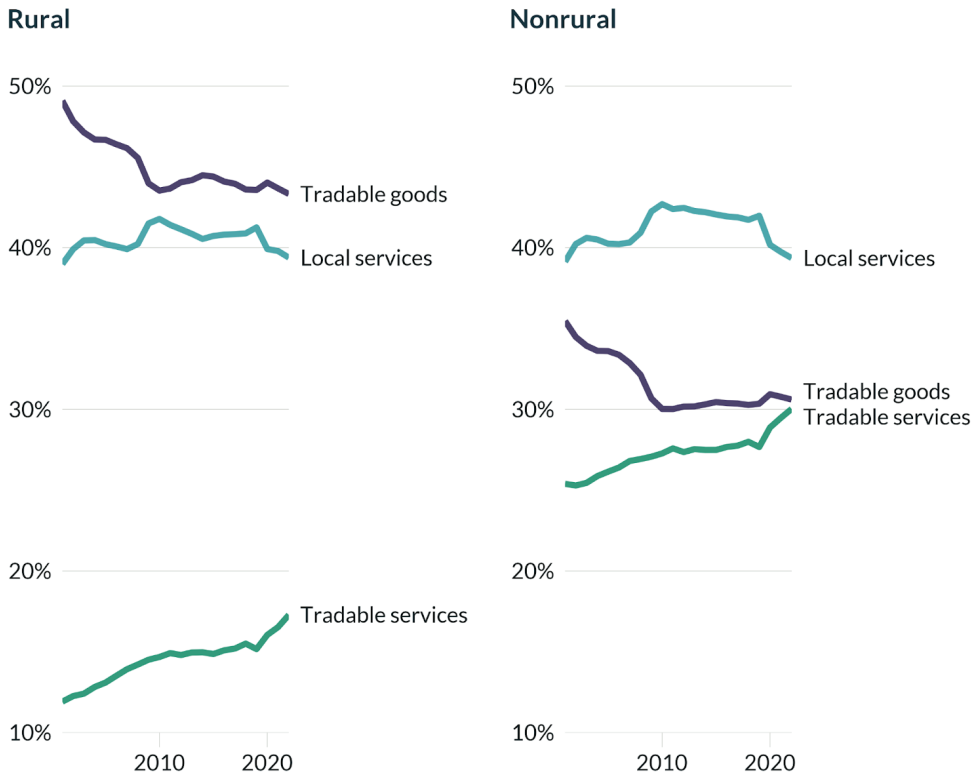


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Meanwhile, advances in technology have fueled growth in high-wage tradable service jobs such as finance and tech—but overwhelmingly in metropolitan areas. Tradable services (knowledge economy jobs) account for nearly one-third of metro jobs but fewer than 20% of rural ones. This gap has produced the largest employment divide between rural and nonrural America.

Tradable services represent a larger share of employment in nonrural areas than rural areas

Share of employment by sector



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis
Note: "Rural" refers to the nonmetro definition which includes all nonmetro counties.

To address these challenges, it is critical to define what we mean by "rural" and who rural residents are. Federal agencies use more than a dozen classifications, creating inconsistencies that affect which of the nation's 48 million rural residents (15% of the U.S. population) are eligible for funding, prioritized in policy, or even recognized in national narratives. At CORI, we use a combination of the Office of Management and Budget's nonmetropolitan classification and USDA's RUCA codes 4 or higher (**Center on Rural Innovation**). This approach captures communities that are rural in character, small towns and open landscapes disconnected from major metropolitan economies, while excluding larger, more prosperous suburbs. The result is a clearer picture of places that share common social and economic dynamics (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2023**). Research shows rural residents from every background are more likely to feel a strong sense of place and deep ties to the shared fate of their community (**Jacobs & Shea, 2024**).

Rural America, however, is far from monolithic. More than 11 million rural residents—over a quarter of the total—are people of color (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2023**). Rural communities include immigrants, multigenerational families, and young professionals drawn by natural amenities and tight-knit social networks. To realize the full potential of this diversity, rural tech ecosystems must intentionally build inclusive cultures that reflect

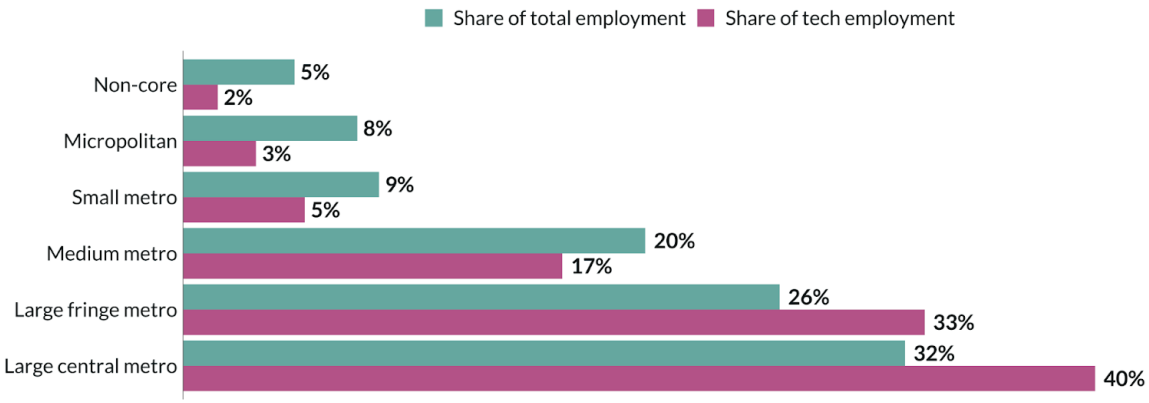
and leverage local strengths, rather than replicate exclusionary urban tech models that have too often left talent on the sidelines. This dynamism is visible in **Taos, New Mexico**, where a multicultural artistic heritage intersects with new opportunities in the tech economy, and in **Wilson, North Carolina**, where a historic agricultural town is reinventing itself as an innovation hub after the decline of tobacco. These diverse perspectives and strong social capital, networks that enable collaboration and resilience, are powerful assets for growth. As Matt Allen, founder of the startup **DifferentKind** in rural Buena Vista, Colorado, explained: "In these smaller towns, you have the ability to be known at a deeper level... There is that ability to have a lot of people cheering for you." Understanding this social fabric is as important as analyzing economic data; it provides the foundation for building innovation and opportunity.

Among rural communities, micropolitan areas—towns of 10,000 to 50,000 residents—stand out. They are large enough to sustain downtowns and regional economic activity, yet small enough to share many of the disadvantages of more remote rural places. Too often, they fall into policy blind spots, excluded from rural programs (that use definitions of rural that exclude small towns) due to their population size and overlooked by urban-focused investment. Yet they hold tremendous promise. Their downtowns, civic institutions, and regional reach position them to anchor new forms of growth. With targeted investment, micropolitan areas can generate ripple effects across entire regions, multiplying the impact of development efforts.

The gap in tradable services is not only a challenge but a profound opportunity. Tech work is among the least geographically constrained professions, with significant potential for remote employment (**BLS, 2022**). Yet rural Americans, who make up 11% of the national workforce, account for only 4% of tech talent. The disparity is even greater in micropolitan areas and among people of color. Similarly, while 12% of U.S. businesses are located in rural areas, only 6% of high-tech establishments are (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2025**). By fostering entrepreneurship, rural communities can build footholds in technology and other tradable services and diversify their economies. Without new, forward-looking strategies, rural areas risk falling further behind, limiting not only rural prosperity but also the nation's overall innovation capacity by overlooking communities long adept at doing more with less.

Large central and fringe metro counties' share of tech employment outpaces their share of total employment

Share of tech and total employment by county rurality



Source: ACS 5-year estimates

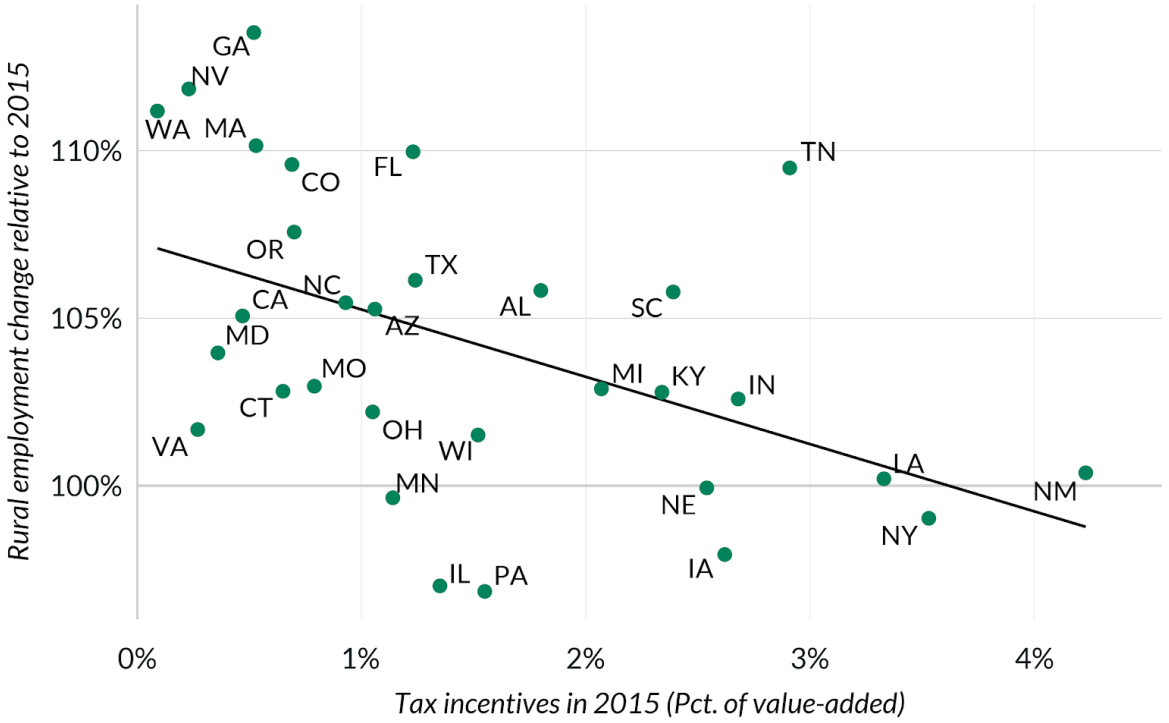
Rethinking Traditional Economic Development Strategies

Many communities have tried to counter economic decline by luring large outside firms with tax breaks and financial incentives. This strategy dates back to Mississippi's 1936 **Balance Agriculture With Industry** program, designed to diversify rural economies beyond farming. The strategy spread nationwide, fueling competition among states and towns to attract "footloose" firms (**Conroy and Deller, 2018**; **Hicks, Weinstein, & Wornell, 2025**).

But this model is fundamentally flawed. Today, communities compete for a shrinking pool of relocations—competitions rural areas are least likely to win (**Hicks, Weinstein, & Wornell, 2025**; **Partridge & Olfert, 2011**; **Slattery & Zidar, 2020**). Even when successful, the payoff is far smaller than in the past: modern plants are highly automated and capital-intensive, creating only a fraction of the jobs they once did. Too often, the costs outweigh the benefits and leave communities dependent on a single industry, delaying the transition to more innovative sectors. Larger state incentive programs are even correlated with lower rural job growth (**Patrick, 2014**), yet struggling rural communities often feel the greatest pressure to rely on this economic development strategy (**Betz et al., 2012**).

States with higher tax incentives in 2015 experienced less rural employment growth in the last 7 years

Tax incentives in 2015 (pct. of value-added) vs. 2022 rural employment change relative to 2015 by state

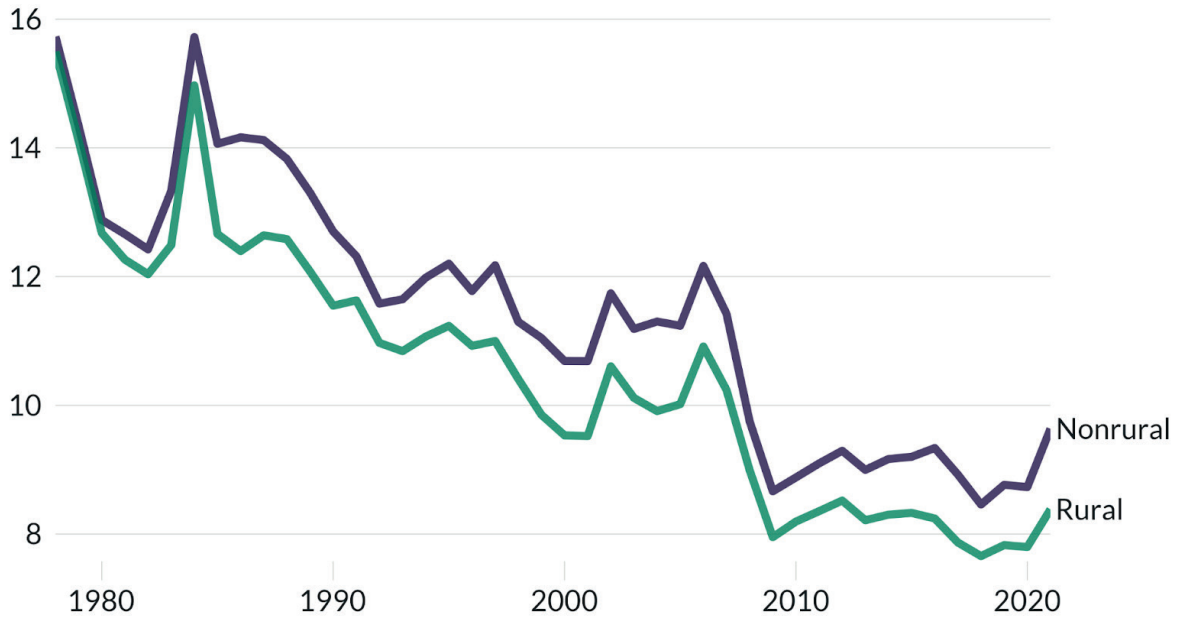


Source: Bartik, Timothy J. 2017. "A New Panel Database on Business Incentives for Economic Development Offered by State and Local Governments in the United States." Prepared for the Pew Charitable Trusts. https://research.upjohn.org/reports/225/. 2015 and 2022 Bureau of Economic Analysis
Notes: 100% line indicates no change in rural employment between 2015 and 2022. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is -0.483.

The bigger problem is that incentives rarely drive firm location decisions. Research shows they have little effect on where companies choose to locate (Bartik, 2018). Their benefits flow disproportionately to large corporations: more than 30% of facilities with over 1,000 employees receive subsidies, compared to fewer than 0.2% of small businesses with under 250 employees (Slattery and Zidar, 2020). This is a critical flaw: subsidized firms create no more jobs than comparable firms without subsidies (Donegan et al., 2019), while small, locally owned businesses consistently drive more lasting growth (Fleming and Goetz, 2011). That matters especially for rural areas, where small businesses account for 54% of jobs, compared to 46% in metropolitan regions (Wilmoth, 2023). Not coincidentally, the rise of big-firm incentives has coincided with a sharp decline in entrepreneurship, particularly in rural America.

Average establishment entry rate

By rurality



Source: Business Dynamic Statistics

Unlike historic place-based investments such as rural electrification in the 1930s, which transformed economies by delivering foundational infrastructure (Gaggl et al., 2021), today's incentive-driven models drain resources from what rural communities truly need: the capacity to diversify, innovate, and grow new businesses. Far from generating business dynamism, these strategies often suppress it (Partridge et al., 2020).

Rural America needs a new model, one rooted in community assets. Instead of chasing factories, development strategies must invest in local talent, entrepreneurship, and the infrastructure needed to compete in today's economy. Communities like Springfield, Vermont, once a hub of precision manufacturing, are charting this path by cultivating tech talent and innovation from within.

In short, chasing smokestacks ties rural communities to the past. Building innovation ecosystems unlocks their future. That is the foundation of CORI's model.

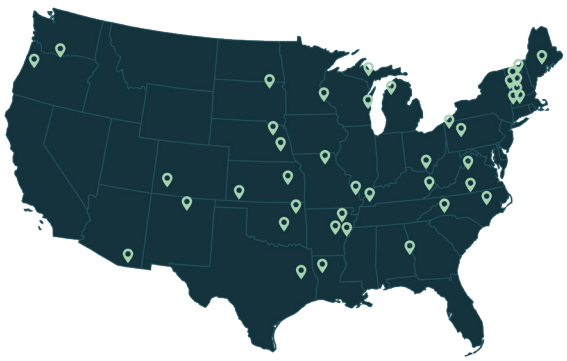
A New Model: The CORI Framework for Tech-Based Economic Development

A more effective path for rural prosperity is to cultivate a tech-based economy from the ground up through a community-centered approach. This approach invests in infrastructure, local talent and startups, creating a cycle where skilled jobs and new businesses fuel innovation, and innovation, in turn, generates more jobs and businesses.

Tech jobs are central to this model. As some of the highest-paying and fastest-growing positions in the economy, they offer a path to upward mobility without forcing residents to leave their hometowns, thanks to the rise of remote work (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2024**). These jobs also have a powerful multiplier effect on the local economy, as each new high-tech position supports an additional three to five jobs in other industries (**Moretti, 2013**; **Bartik & Sotherland, 2019**). Furthermore, a strong local tech workforce becomes the foundation for new business creation. When innovators with knowledge of local challenges connect with skilled talent, they can launch scalable companies that create jobs and attract investment, and strengthen U.S. competitiveness (**Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2000**).

This approach redefines the geography of innovation. For decades, we tied innovation to "agglomeration"—dense clusters of skilled workers and businesses in big cities. But that view mistakes the vehicle (physical proximity) for the engine (the collision of diverse ideas and perspectives). With today's digital connectivity, those collisions no longer require colocation; they can emerge across communities of all sizes. The new frontier lies in interconnected, distributed networks that link talent and ideas to resources across geographies.

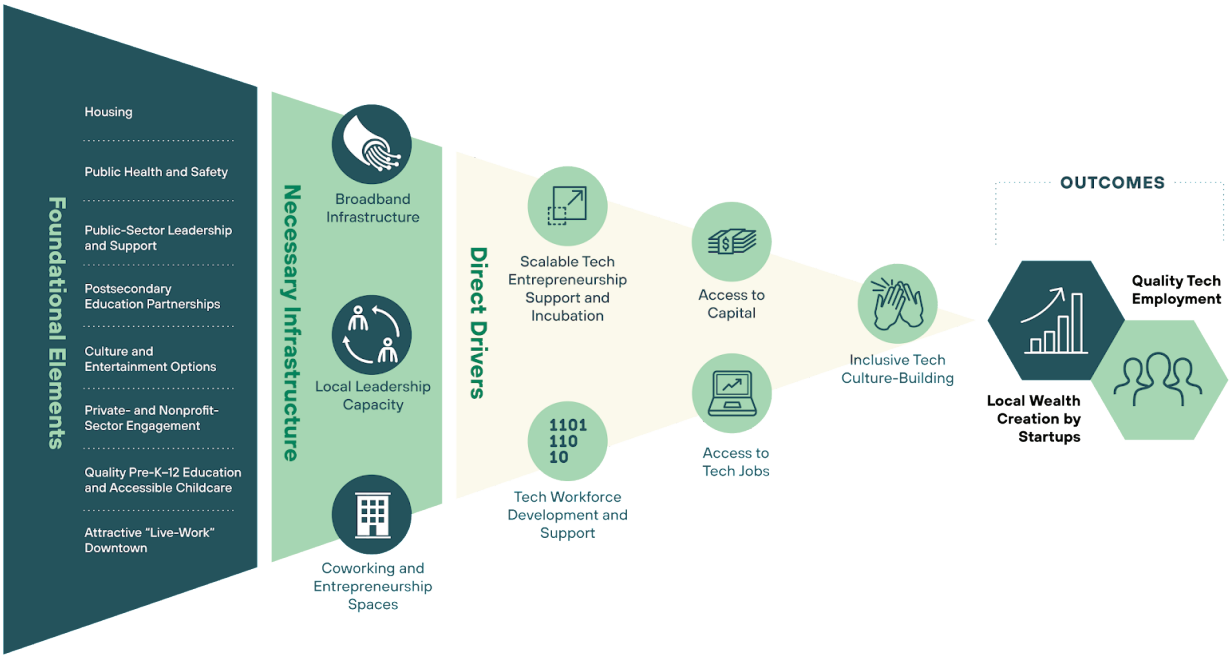
CORI's model is built to harness this new reality through the **Rural Innovation Network**, a national community of practice. This network helps rural leaders avoid working in silos, share best practices, and collectively experiment with new strategies, accelerating progress while reducing the risks of trial and error. A community of practice multiplies local capacity and strengthens rural resilience by turning individual lessons into shared strategies. Realizing this potential, however, requires more than just talent; it demands strategic, sustained investment in the infrastructure and ecosystems that enable rural America to fully participate in this new era of innovation.



CORI's Rural Innovation Network

A Scalable Framework for National Impact

The Center on Rural Innovation's work in more than 40 communities across 25 states has refined this model into a practical framework for rural economic transformation. It focuses on three interconnected layers: foundational elements, necessary infrastructure, and the direct drivers of innovation. Rural communities have long lacked the investments needed to compete—reliable broadband, workforce training, entrepreneurial support and access to capital. The Center on Rural Innovation's framework addresses these gaps, enabling tech ecosystems to take root and grow in rural America.



1. Foundational Elements

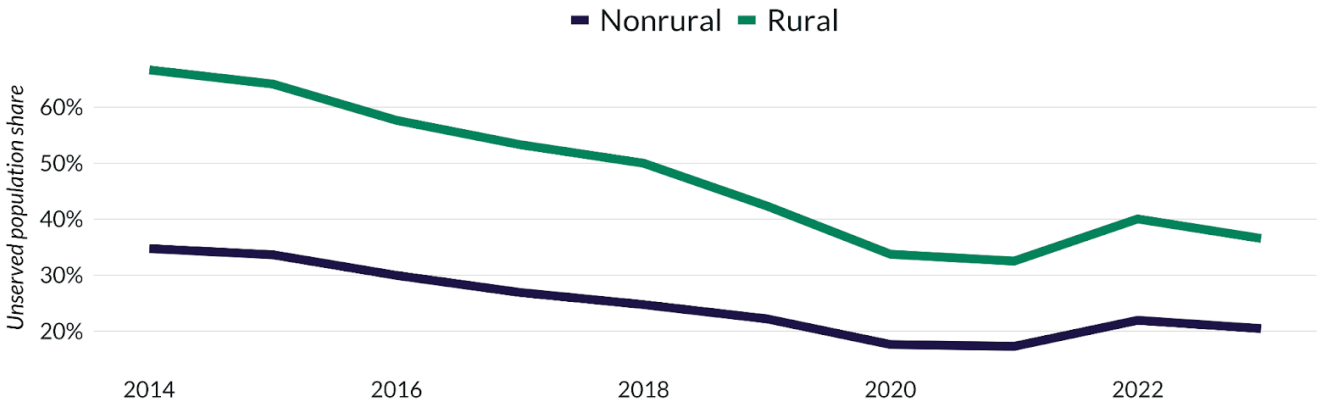
Thriving tech economies are built in strong communities that can retain and attract skilled workers. As **Partridge and Olfert (2011)** note, "Recognizing that knowledge will likely remain the catalyst for economic growth and innovation, regions with an attractive quality of life for high-skilled workers will have an advantage." The importance of these foundational elements of quality of life is visible in places like **Traverse City, Michigan** (pictured, right), which leverages its lakeside beauty and vibrant downtown to support a growing tech sector, and in **The Berkshires in Massachusetts**, where a rich arts and culture scene attracts skilled workers and entrepreneurs. Similarly, in Selma, Alabama, community members utilized a "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" placemaking approach to install long-awaited wayfinding signs in the historic downtown, a small but significant step that reinvigorated civic engagement and community pride (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2024**). Quality of life means more than lifestyle amenities; it includes essential services such as healthcare, education, and broadband, ensuring communities meet both the preferences and the aspirations of today's workforce (**Weinstein, Hicks, and Wornell, 2023**).

2. Necessary Infrastructure

Reliable broadband is as fundamental to modern economic development as roads or electricity. While rural connectivity has improved, and significant grant-funded broadband construction is set to occur over the next 5 years in rural areas, as of today, a meaningful gap in broadband access and adoption remains. Without broadband, rural residents struggle to access education and healthcare, find good jobs, or secure capital to grow a business. "Researchers widely agree that high-speed internet improves economic outcomes of rural areas, whether it is through increases in business activity or in more general economic development measures (e.g., productivity, jobs, income)" (Mack et al., 2023). This effect is especially pronounced when community-rooted internet service providers lead the deployment, as they often go beyond installation to increase broadband utilization through investment in local tech ecosystems: community outreach, education and training, and small business support. The economic impact is clear: rural counties with high broadband utilization experience 213% higher growth rates in new business establishments and 44% higher GDP growth rates than those with low utilization (Center on Rural Innovation, 2024).

The rural broadband gap

Share of the population unserved by broadband infrastructure



Source: CORI's analysis of FCC Form 477 and National Broadband Map.
Notes: Unserved populations are defined as having maximum advertised speeds less than 25 Mbs download and 3 Mbs upload.
`Rural` refers to the `nonmetro plus` definition, which included all nonmetro counties and all tracts classified as RUCA 4 or higher.

Building a modern rural economy requires more than digital infrastructure; broadband must be leveraged through physical spaces and programming that help workers and entrepreneurs turn access into opportunity. Bemidji, Minnesota, illustrates this model perfectly. There, the local ISP, Paul Bunyan Communications, first built a nearly county-wide fiber network. But they didn't stop at infrastructure; they invested in activating it throughout the community. They supported Bemidji's Technology Park to provide space for tech businesses to scale, backed the LaunchPad coworking and incubator space, and hosted engaging community events like the GigaZone Gaming Championship, TechXpo, and the Northstartup pitch competition. By also offering scholarships and internships, they help foster the next generation of local tech talent. This comprehensive approach created measurable growth: between 2020 and 2022, the county experienced a 12.1% increase in businesses and a 7% rise in per-capita income (Center on Rural Innovation, 2024). Modern infrastructure plus community investment created measurable growth.

3. Direct Drivers

With the foundational elements and infrastructure in place, a tech-based economy is propelled by two interconnected engines: developing a skilled workforce and fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. Investing in these drivers enables rural communities to build dynamic, resilient economies from the ground up.

Tech Talent Development: Expanding Access to Opportunity

A highly skilled workforce is one of the most consistent predictors of long-run economic success, yet a significant skills gap persists in rural America. With an estimated 92% of all jobs now requiring digital proficiency (**Shilcock et al., 2023**), the lack of equitable access to training prevents rural communities from creating and filling the approximately 80,000 missing tech jobs in existing rural industries. The demand for these skills is strong—59% of rural adults express interest in tech careers, but significant barriers prevent them from pursuing these opportunities (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2022**).

This gap begins early, as rural high school students are less likely to have access to computer science courses (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2023**) and extends into adulthood. Traditional higher education is often a poor fit for rural learners, who are more likely to be working adults balancing family and finances (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2025**; **Dunn, 2025**). Barriers like distance, cost, and a lack of reliable internet further limit access to conventional training pathways (**Institute for College Access & Success, 2023**).

Rural high school students have fewer opportunities to access computer science classes

Share of students who attend high schools that offer computer science

Source: Code.org (2024)
Notes: 'Rural' refers to the 'nonmetro' definition, which includes all nonmetro counties

Successfully bridging this divide requires creating flexible, industry-recognized training pathways that directly address these challenges (**Center on Rural Innovation, 2025**). Programs in fields like IT, data analytics, and cybersecurity as well as upskilling in artificial intelligence (AI), can rapidly equip residents for high-demand roles. To be effective, these programs must integrate critical support structures and wraparound services. Because rural learners often face unique obstacles—such as childcare needs, long commutes, or the necessity of working while studying—supports like flexible scheduling, childcare assistance, and transportation stipends are essential for improving both enrollment and completion rates.

At the same time, awareness-building is crucial. Research shows that rural residents who know about local tech jobs are nearly three times more optimistic about securing a tech job than those who are unaware of such opportunities (Center on Rural Innovation, 2022). By expanding outreach and engaging local employers, training providers can align their curricula with actual market demand, ensuring learners acquire the specific skills—from IT and data analytics to AI—that regional businesses need.

This integrated approach creates powerful stories of transformation. In Emporia, Kansas, Jordan Davis (pictured, top right) transitioned from the local service industry to a career as an Information Security Analyst by complementing on-the-job training with a local telecom firm and a technical college degree from Flint Hills Technical College. Similarly, Jonn Semexant (pictured, bottom right) moved from Boston to the Berkshires in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, leveraging IT certifications to successfully shift from teaching high school English to becoming a Network Administrator at a local bank.

To scale these successes, the Center on Rural Innovation has led projects such as Enhancing Rural Workforce Capacity Through Tech-Driven Development, part of the U.S. Department of Labor's WORC program, and partnered with local communities such as Chambers County, Alabama, local employers, and Cisco to design cohort-based training, layering in credentialing support and internships. This approach connected learners directly to employer needs while reducing barriers to certification. Pathways like this, ones that don't require a four-year degree or relocation, are essential to expanding economic opportunity and building a future-proof workforce in rural communities.

Fostering Entrepreneurship: Building a Dynamic Economy

A skilled workforce fuels entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship is one of the clearest paths to rural renewal. New businesses diversify local economies, helping communities pivot from declining sectors toward higher-growth industries such as tech. Research shows entrepreneurship can boost growth even in lagging regions (Stephens and Partridge, 2011). It also creates pathways for rural residents to build wealth for themselves and their communities. Rural residents are more likely than their urban peers to start businesses and often earn higher incomes than other rural workers (Yu & Artz, 2018). Small business entrepreneurship also raises incomes and alleviates poverty in rural areas (Fleming & Goetz, 2011; Nene & Abegaz, 2021).

Technological change has made rural ownership even more important. Productivity gains have not necessarily translated into higher wages for workers (Economic Policy Institute, 2025). Ensuring that rural residents own and grow firms helps keep those gains in rural places. Tradable-services businesses, in particular, import wealth into communities, expand opportunity, and can help close the rural–urban divide.

Yet rural America faces a paradox: rural residents are more likely to want to start businesses than their urban counterparts and rural businesses have higher survival rates, but new business formation in rural areas has steadily declined for decades (G.R.O.W. Report; Center on Rural Innovation, 2025; Deller and Conroy, 2016). Structural barriers stifle rural entrepreneurs, including geographic isolation, demographic and wealth gaps, and capital markets that largely overlook them (Hwang et al., 2019). The funding gap is especially stark: in 2023, rural businesses received just 1% of U.S. private investment despite representing 12% of firms (Center on Rural Innovation, 2025). Limited deal flow

and the insular nature of venture capital networks curb investment in rural America. Too often, federal programs that expand access to capital end up reinforcing rather than narrowing the divide between rural and urban America (Center on Rural Innovation, 2025).

Rural areas capture a very small share of private investment

Share of private investment dollars received by U.S. businesses in 2023

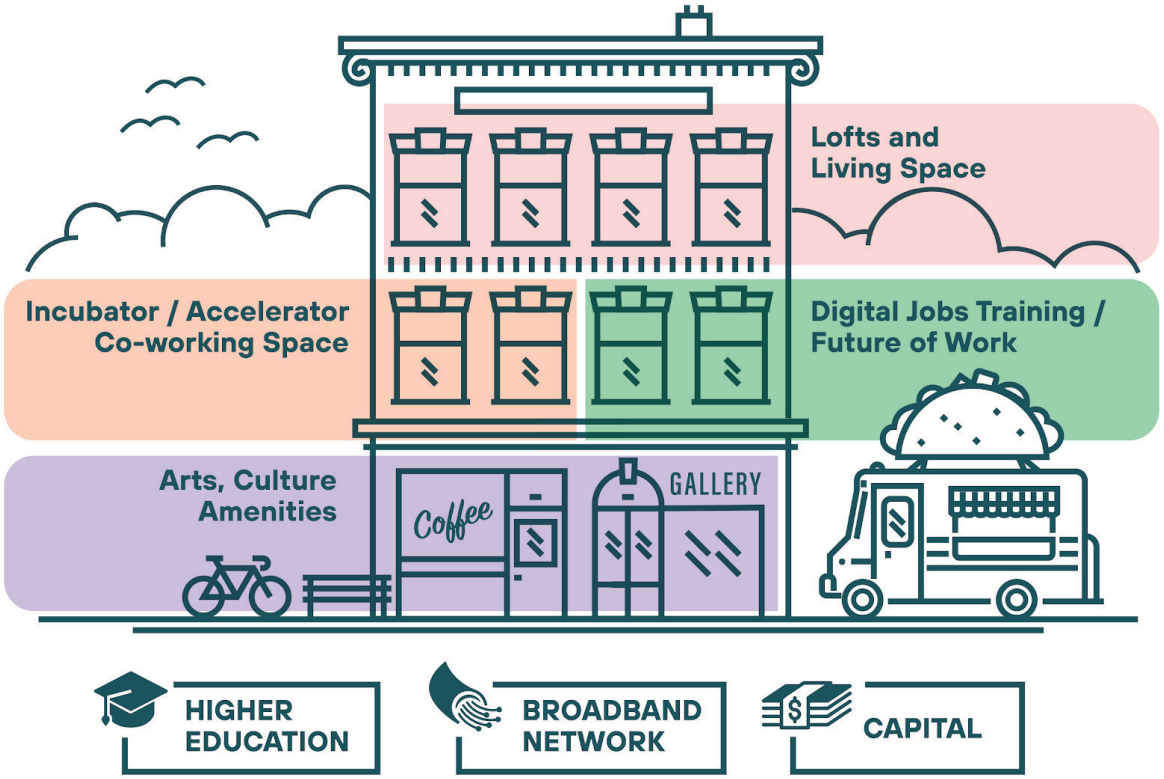
Source: CORI analysis of Form D filings
Note: The top 5 private fundraising metro areas in 2023 were San Francisco–Oakland–Berkeley, Boston–Cambridge–Newton, New York–Newark–Jersey City, Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, and Chicago–Naperville–Elgin.

Closing this gap requires targeted public and private funding tailored to rural needs. The CORI Investment Fund (CIF), for example, was founded on the belief that "rural America is rich with talent but systematically excluded from traditional venture capital networks" (Center on Rural Innovation, 2025). Similarly, the Greater Colorado Venture Fund is addressing Colorado's rural capital gap, where only $70 million of $6.8 billion in statewide venture capital reached rural founders in 2022. By backing firms like Agile Space Industries and BOPA Precision Agriculture, these funds are helping innovative rural startups take root and grow in emerging sectors. Looking forward, new technologies such as AI can further level the playing field—enabling rural startups to automate tasks, expand capacity, and enter markets that once seemed out of reach.

For this growth to be truly transformative, however, it must be inclusive. The tech sector nationally remains disproportionately white, male, and urban. Rural communities, by building new ecosystems from the ground up, have an opportunity to do better—to design inclusive cultures from the start, ensuring that innovation reflects and benefits the full diversity of their residents.

From Fragmented Efforts to a Collaborative Ecosystem

Rural development too often happens in fragments: broadband here, workforce training there, and scattered small business grants. Real transformation, however, comes from connecting these pieces into a cohesive innovation ecosystem tailored to a community's unique strengths and goals. This systemic approach is more durable and inclusive than any single investment, and even deeply disadvantaged rural areas are seeing results by intentionally investing in these interconnected building blocks (Center on Rural Innovation, 2024). The goal is not to replicate urban models, but to create collaborative systems that reflect rural strengths and empower local talent to solve problems and leverage opportunities.



A primary barrier to this work is limited rural leadership capacity. The federal funding landscape is overwhelmingly complex, and local leaders often lack the staff and expertise to navigate it while juggling competing responsibilities (Pipa & Geismar, 2020; Jonix et al., 2016). Outmigration compounds the challenge, draining many places of their next generation of leaders (Shackelford et al., 2025). Because leadership bandwidth is so constrained, peer-to-peer learning and shared problem-solving become critical, allowing communities to accelerate progress by sharing strategies that work in other small towns rather than reinventing the wheel. A strong community of practice builds collective capacity so that small towns can punch above their weight, helping them design curricula and provide mentorship for new founders—all while building on the deep social capital that already exists within rural communities and expanding those connections across places.

The Center on Rural Innovation was created to address leadership capacity challenges directly. We provide technical assistance to help rural communities access and win federal grants, such as the EDA's Build to Scale program, and our Economic Development Tool provides user-friendly data on key metrics—from tech jobs to venture capital—so local stakeholders can use data to advocate for funding and track their progress. Through our research, we expose systemic biases that disadvantage rural areas and reframe policy debates to push for more equitable investment across America.

This transformation must be managed thoughtfully. Many rural communities we work with have endured decades of decline following plant closures and industrial shifts, and they are now pursuing new strategies to reverse that trend and foster growth. Yet sustained growth in a small town can also bring new pressures, such as rising housing costs, strain on infrastructure, and the risk of cultural displacement. CORI's community-driven, "grow-from-within" model is designed to mitigate these risks. By focusing on local entrepreneurship and equipping current residents with new skills, rather than relying primarily on outside firms and talent, we help ensure that existing community members are the first to benefit from emerging opportunities. These programs must also be

intentionally inclusive—reaching underserved groups to build a tech economy that reflects the whole community and delivers equitable, long-term prosperity.

Bridging the rural–urban divide is not just a rural issue—it is a national imperative. America's long-term prosperity depends on tapping the full potential of all its people and places. The next decade will determine whether rural America is included in the innovation economy. *The Center on Rural Innovation has the vision, the model, and the network to ensure that it is.*

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