

Microsoft TechSpark Initiative

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About Microsoft TechSpark

Microsoft TechSpark is a civic program aimed at fostering greater economic opportunity and job creation through partnership with rural and smaller metropolitan communities. Our goal is to learn about local challenges and to implement and learn from digital initiatives to help accelerate growth, with a plan to then share that learning more broadly. Microsoft is working in communities and with local partners on five programs that will help accelerate economic growth through regional internet connectivity, digital skills development, career development, nonprofit support, and digital business transformation. The initiative will evolve over time based on our learnings. We will focus our resources to learn, contribute, and share in specific communities in six states: in North Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

Industry Statistics

- There are nearly 500,000 unfilled computing jobs in the U.S. and that number is expected to be over 1.7 million jobs by the end of next year. ([Code.org](#))
- Last year, only 42,969 computer science students graduated with bachelor's degrees into the workforce. ([Code.org](#))
- Jobs in growing sectors increasingly require new skills earned through certificate or credentialing programs, or post-secondary degrees. Nearly seven out of 10 Americans have transferable skills, but not a four-year college degree. ([Microsoft & Markle Foundation](#)).
- There are 7.3 million fewer jobs in the United States today for people with a high school degree or less than there were in 1989. At the same time, 6 million jobs in our country go unfilled due in large part to a shortage of skilled workers. ([Microsoft & Markle Foundation](#))
- 23.4 million Americans who live in rural communities lack access to the economic, educational, and health opportunities broadband provides. ([FCC 2016 Progress Report](#)).

TechSpark Initiatives

1. **Digital Transformation Initiatives.** These initiatives, pursued in partnership with local organizations, will work with both new start-ups, growing companies and established businesses in traditional industries to develop their own digital technology advances and foster business growth.
2. **Digital Skills and Computer Science Education.** Microsoft provides cash grants, technology, curriculum and resources to nonprofits, and partner with schools to strengthen their ability to offer digital skills and computer science education to the youth they serve. Programs like our [Technology Education and Literacy in Schools Program \(TEALS\)](#) will bring computer science education to more high schools in each region. TEALS is an industry-wide effort that brings computer science engineers from Microsoft and other companies together with classroom teachers to team-teach computer science during the school day.
3. **Career Pathways.** This program will partner with high schools, community colleges and other institutions to expand learning opportunities for students of all ages, including by providing greater access to technology tools, training and other resources. It will focus on enabling people to acquire the skills and connect with jobs that require less than a traditional four-year college degree.
4. **Rural Broadband.** Microsoft's Airband team will invest and partner with telecommunications firms in specific regions to expand broadband coverage to targeted rural areas, using TV White Spaces spectrum and other technologies.
5. **Support for Nonprofits.** Recognizing the important role that nonprofit groups play in addressing local needs, Microsoft Philanthropies will increase its financial and technology support for non-profit groups in each region

