

Ford Convenes National Leaders to Tackle Productivity Gap in America's Essential Economy

- Three hundred leaders representing government and the United States' largest industrial firms gather to improve productivity in the Essential Economy – the 3 million businesses and 95 million workers who build, move and fix America
- The summit addresses critical barriers—workforce shortages, complex regulations, and uneven innovation—that hinder infrastructure development and the affordability of goods and services
- Ford and Ford Philanthropy announce several new investments for workforce programs to provide critical skills, tools, and resources for more than 100,000 students and educators

DETROIT, Mich., Sept. 30, 2025 – Ford Pro is convening 300 leaders from across the Essential Economy – critical industries like manufacturing, utilities, transportation, construction, and energy, among others – for a national forum to accelerate productivity in these critical sectors.

The summit, Ford Pro Accelerate: The Essential Economy, held at Michigan Central Station in Detroit, comes at an urgent moment for America, which is grappling with a yawning productivity divide. From 2015 to 2023, productivity in the knowledge economy rose 28 percent, powered by innovation in software and cloud services. During that same period, productivity in much of the Essential Economy declined.

“This summit addresses a fundamental challenge to America’s prosperity: a growing productivity divide that holds back the very people who build, move, and fix our country,” said Jim Farley, Ford president and CEO. “At Ford, we believe honoring these essential workers means equipping them to win. This is a call to action for business, technology, and government to break down the barriers of bureaucracy and underinvestment. The work we begin today is about ensuring America’s Essential Economy is strong and fit for the future.”

The urgency of this mission was echoed by other national business leaders.

“I would put this in the category of critically important right now,” said Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JPMorganChase. “America has one of the best and most prosperous economies the world has ever seen. But we’ve gotten bogged down by crippling bureaucracy that slows down growth, job creation, and innovation. Too often, it can take longer to get permits than to build something. We can grow our economy for the benefit of all Americans, and I believe meetings like this will help us do that.”

“We need to do a better job helping people understand how critical our industries are,” said John May, chairman and CEO of Deere & Company. “We need to demonstrate our purpose—to provide the food and critical infrastructure the world needs with equipment that allows our

customers to do it in a more productive way and more profitably so they can continue to reinvest in their business and reinvest in their community.”

“More than a million skilled trade jobs are going unfilled today – a number that’s only projected to rise,” said Linda Hubbard, President and CEO, Carhartt, Inc. “Skilled trade jobs are too often overlooked as pathways to meaningful careers, yet these workers are the backbone of our economy. Elevating and investing in this workforce is critical to our physical infrastructure, industrial production and community development—everything that supports our society and helps it advance.”

In partnership with the Aspen Institute, Ford identified three evidence-based paths to address these productivity challenges:

- **Bolstering Human Capital:** As the U.S. faces major workforce shortages—including 600,000 workers in manufacturing and 500,000 unfilled jobs in construction—federal spending on workforce services has dropped by two-thirds in inflation-adjusted terms since 1979.
- **Streamlining Regulatory Procedures:** The average time for approval of a power-connection request has more than doubled since the early 2000s, and the U.S. now adds only one-eighth the annual miles of high-voltage transmission lines compared to 20 years ago.
- **Fostering Innovation Where It’s Needed Most:** Federal spending on R&D is at its lowest point as a percentage of GDP since 1953, with innovation shifting away from industrial sectors. The manufacturing industry’s share of new patents fell from 78% in 1970 to 30% in 2010.

Recognizing that action must come from both the public and private sectors, Ford is leading through its **Ford Essential Workforce Initiative**. This includes programs like the UAW-Ford Joint Apprentice Program; nationwide auto tech recruiting and training partnerships; and Ford Pro services that make customers more productive, including a new collaboration with ServiceTitan.

Building on this commitment, Ford and Ford Philanthropy today announced new workforce development investments totaling over \$5 million for 2025-2026, projected to benefit more than 100,000 students and educators through:

- **15 Ford Future Builders Labs** in Michigan and Tennessee to bring hands-on learning to K-12 students.
- A new partnership with **SkillsUSA** to expand advanced manufacturing and automotive programs for high school students.
- The creation of the **Ford Philanthropy Advanced Manufacturing & Trades Scholarship** to cover training, tools, and expenses for students pursuing careers in the skilled trades.
- The expansion of **Ford’s Auto Tech Scholarship** with TechForce Foundation, which has already provided \$7 million in financial support to 1,400 students since 2023.

As part of these efforts, Ford is also exploring with Bloomberg Philanthropies how to expand its innovative model for career-focused high schools to the skilled trades.

Ford Pro Accelerate: The Essential Economy

At 10:30 a.m. ET today, a livestream of the Ford Pro Accelerate: The Essential Economy mainstage will be broadcast on fromtheroad.ford.com. [Click here to register for access](#) to the mainstage discussions.

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About Ford Motor Company

Ford Motor Company (NYSE: F) is a global company based in Dearborn, Michigan, committed to helping build a better world, where every person is free to move and pursue their dreams. The company's Ford+ plan for growth and value creation combines existing strengths, new capabilities, and always-on relationships with customers to enrich experiences for customers and deepen their loyalty. Ford develops and delivers innovative, must-have Ford trucks, sport utility vehicles, commercial vans and cars and Lincoln luxury vehicles, along with connected services. The company offers freedom of choice through three customer-centered business segments: Ford Blue, engineering iconic gas-powered and hybrid vehicles; Ford Model e, inventing breakthrough electric vehicles ("EVs") along with embedded software that defines always-on digital experiences for all customers; and Ford Pro, helping commercial customers transform and expand their businesses with vehicles and services tailored to their needs. Additionally, the Company provides financial services through Ford Motor Credit Company. Ford employs about 169,000 people worldwide. More information about the company and its products and services is available at corporate.ford.com.

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