



Goodwill ARKANSAS

PRESS RELEASE

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Goodwill Arkansas Awarded \$850,000 Grant from BlackRock Future Builders™ to Expand Skilled Trades Training Across Arkansas

Goodwill Arkansas is one of only 15 organizations nationwide selected for funding and the only recipient in Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (October 1, 2026) — Goodwill Arkansas today announced it has been selected to receive \$850,000 through BlackRock Future Builders, a national philanthropic initiative funded by The BlackRock Foundation to help workers as they pursue careers in the skilled trades. The investment is part of more than \$13 million awarded by The BlackRock Foundation through its first national request for proposals and will significantly expand skilled trade training opportunities for Arkansans through The Academy at Goodwill.

Selected as one of only 15 organizations nationwide from more than 1,000 applicants, Goodwill Arkansas is the only organization in the state, and one of only two Goodwill networks nationwide, selected for the grant. The award is the largest privately- funded grant ever received by Goodwill Arkansas. BlackRock Future Builders partnered with Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national nonprofit with workforce development expertise, to support the application review process.

The grant will strengthen and expand training in The Academy's welding and construction programs while providing tuition-free training for 220 participants in Central and Northwest Arkansas. It will lay the groundwork for continued growth in additional skilled trades pathways aligned with employer and workforce needs across the state.

"This investment gives Goodwill Arkansas an opportunity to expand and accelerate our role in strengthening the state's workforce," said Brian Marsh, president and CEO of Goodwill Arkansas. "Employers across Arkansas need skilled workers, and those individuals need accessible training that provides greater stability and opportunity. This funding grants us the ability to act on a much broader vision for The Academy at Goodwill to grow our training capacity and create new pathways into high-demand careers."

Programs supported through the broader initiative span trades including electrical, construction, HVAC, welding, plumbing, pipefitting and heavy equipment operation. Grant recipients will use the funding to expand hands-on training, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities and access to industry-recognized credentials.

“Skilled trades careers create pathways to economic opportunity and financial wellbeing for individuals, families, and ultimately, communities,” said Claire Chamberlain, President of The BlackRock Foundation. “Through BlackRock Future Builders, we're proud to partner with Goodwill Arkansas as it expands access to training and helps more people in Arkansas gain the skills and experience needed to build lasting careers.”

For Goodwill Arkansas, the investment comes as demand continues to grow for training that connects Arkansans with careers in skilled trades. The Academy at Goodwill, licensed by the Arkansas State Board of Private Career Education, offers accelerated career training designed to help individuals gain the skills and credentials needed to enter the workforce and advance their careers.

BlackRock Future Builders is a \$100 million philanthropic initiative with a goal of training and supporting 50,000 American workers over five years. The national grant program is designed to strengthen skilled trades talent pipelines and expand access to career pathways.

About Goodwill Industries of Arkansas

Goodwill Arkansas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to changing lives through education, training and employment. Through a statewide network of education, career training, employment and reentry programs, Goodwill Arkansas helps individuals overcome barriers, develop skills and build pathways to meaningful employment and greater independence. Programs include The Excel Center®, a tuition-free high school for adults 19 and older, The Academy at Goodwill, which provides career training and industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields, Career Services and Reentry Services. Revenue generated through the sale of donated goods helps fund Goodwill Arkansas’s mission and expand opportunities for Arkansans across the state. www.GoodwillAR.org.

About BlackRock

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About The BlackRock Foundation

Guided by BlackRock’s purpose to help more and more people experience financial well-being, The BlackRock Foundation funds and partners with organizations that strengthen financial security by helping people earn, save and invest – earlier, more often and for their futures.

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