

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT · PROJECT VISION · APRIL 14, 2026

Heartland Community College Grant Opportunities

Leadership Summary — Three high-alignment federal and state grant pathways for Central Illinois' evolving technical workforce ecosystem.

CAMPUS	STATE	TYPE	SERVICE AREA
Single Campus	Illinois	Community College	McLean County, Central IL

GRANTS IDENTIFIED
3 Strong Alignment

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Executive Context

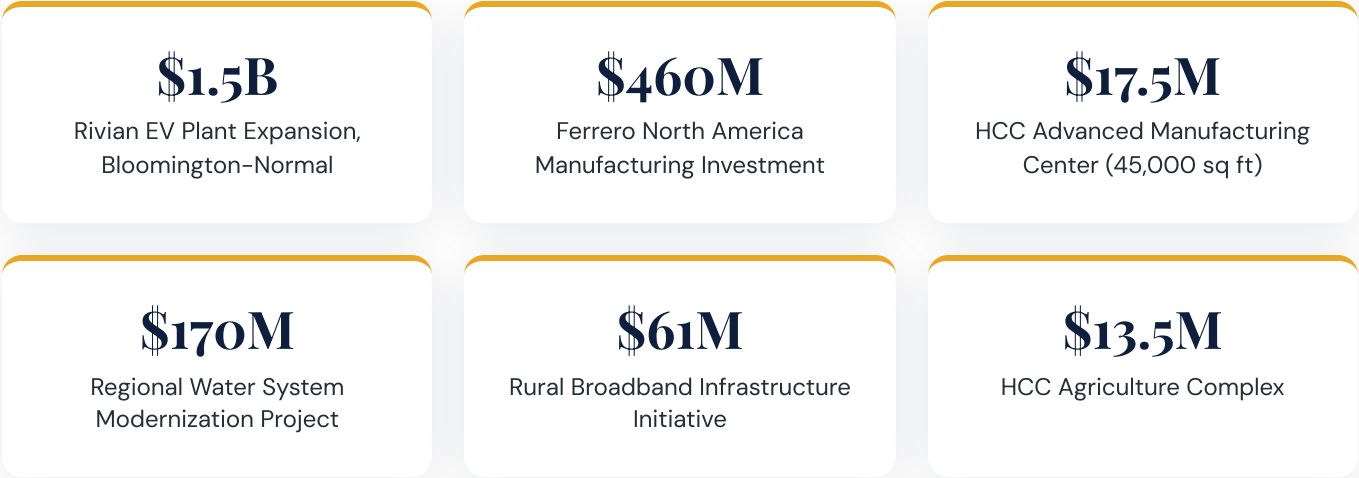
Heartland Community College sits at the epicenter of a historic industrial pivot in Central Illinois. The Bloomington–Normal region, rebranded as "EV Alley," is anchored by Rivian's \$1.5 billion expansion and a thriving secondary supply chain. A \$460 million investment from Ferrero North America has established a critical need for industrial maintenance and PLC-skilled technicians.

With the recent opening of the \$17.5 million, 45,000-square-foot Advanced Manufacturing Center, HCC is uniquely positioned to bridge the *technical ratio* — meeting intense local demand for skilled technicians that significantly outpaces the need for four-year degrees.

HCC's established partnerships with SME FUSION and major regional employers provide the strategic foundation necessary to secure federal and state funding. As the primary talent engine for McLean County, the institution must now scale faculty

capacity and programmatic reach to sustain this unprecedented industrial momentum.

Regional Investment Landscape



Grant Strategy 1 of 3

< ENERGY & ELECTRIFICATION · LOCAL MODEL · 24-584

Advanced Technological Education — EV Alley Battery & Grid Systems Modernization

 **Closes:** Oct 1, 2026  **Funding:** \$475,000 – \$7,500,000  **Alignment Index:** 79.5

✓ Strong Alignment

ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS

Workforce Demand	Strong	Industry Alignment	Strong
Faculty Capacity	Emerging	Strategic Alignment	Strong
Modernization	Strong	Infrastructure	Strong

POSSIBLE GRANT FOCUS AREAS

→ Develop an A.S. degree specialization in Battery Storage & Electric Grid Management

CAPACITY HIGHLIGHTS



CAPACITY NOTE

HCC possesses a world-class Advanced Manufacturing Center and high industry engagement (90.0). Faculty capacity in the energy sector is currently a constraint (55.0), requiring investment in additional full-time instructors or significant curriculum development release time.

- Equip the Advanced Manufacturing Center with high-voltage diagnostic and testing simulators
- Create a modular non-credit EV battery safety certification for emergency responders and utility workers
- Integrate SCADA and industrial controls training for renewable energy grid interfaces
- Partner with regional utilities to align curriculum with the "Accelerate Access" infrastructure rollout
- Expand current EV battery storage modules into a full credit-bearing stackable credential

90-DAY NEXT STEPS

- 1 Identify and recruit a faculty lead to spearhead the NSF ATE grant proposal team
- 2 Conduct a technical needs assessment with Rivian's battery engineering team to define equipment specs
- 3 Draft an MOU with the McLean County Farm Bureau for precision agriculture energy applications
- 4 Schedule a site visit to the Advanced Manufacturing Center for the regional workforce board
- 5 Secure letters of commitment from three Tier 1 EV supply chain partners for the advisory board

Grant Strategy 2 of 3

 TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY · LOCAL MODEL · FOA-ETA-26-40

Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (Round 6)

Automotive Mobility & EV Assembly Workforce Expansion

 **Closes:** May 20, 2026

 **Funding:** \$6,500,000 – \$10,800,000

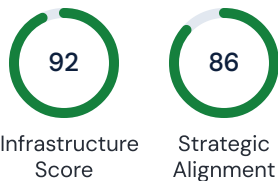
 **Alignment Index:** 79.1

✓ Strong Alignment

ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS

Workforce Demand	Strong	Industry Alignment	Strong
Faculty Capacity	Emerging	Strategic Alignment	Strong
Modernization	Strong	Infrastructure	Strong

CAPACITY HIGHLIGHTS



CAPACITY NOTE

Strong institutional infrastructure (92.0) and strategic alignment (86.0). Primary gap is modernizing existing automotive curriculum to keep pace with Rivian's planned \$1.5B expansion and high-volume assembly needs.

POSSIBLE GRANT FOCUS AREAS

- Scale the existing Rivian talent partnership to include advanced EV assembly certifications
- Develop a short-term intensive bridge program for dislocated workers moving to EV roles
- Establish a Mobile EV Training Lab for on-site instruction at regional supply chain sites
- Integrate AI-driven logistics and supply chain management modules into transportation curriculum
- Formalize a 2-year-to-4-year pathway with regional universities for EV engineering management
- Enhance data science integration within the AAS in Computer Networking for mobility telematics

90-DAY NEXT STEPS

- 1

Host a regional mobility summit with the Economic Development Council to map Tier 1 & 2 supplier landscape
- 2

Perform a curriculum gap analysis against the SME FUSION 2025 workforce shortage findings
- 3

Engage CodePath and Microsoft TEALS to explore embedding high-demand tech roles into mobility certificates
- 4

Finalize the expanded apprenticeship agreement with regional business partners signed in late 2024
- 5

Identify internal administrative leads for managing large-scale SCC grant reporting requirements

Grant Strategy 3 of 3

 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING · LOCAL MODEL · ETA-TEGL-08-25

State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula, Round 4 (SAEF4) — Industrial Maintenance & PLC Automation Accelerator

 **Closes:** May 26, 2026

 **Funding:** \$561,760 – \$8,287,067

 **Workforce Demand Score:** 95.0

✓ Strong Alignment

ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS

Workforce Demand	Strong	Industry Alignment	Strong
Faculty Capacity	Moderate	Strategic Alignment	Strong
Modernization	Emerging	Infrastructure	Strong

POSSIBLE GRANT FOCUS AREAS

- Expand the Registered Apprenticeship model for the Ferrero Kinder Bueno production expansion
- Upgrade the Advanced Manufacturing Center's PLC and Fanuc controller

CAPACITY HIGHLIGHTS



Workforce
Demand



Industry
Engagement



Modernization

CAPACITY NOTE

Facilities and industry ties are exceptionally strong. Lead faculty are currently at teaching capacity (65.0). Robotics and controls equipment requires modernization (50.0) to stay relevant to high-speed production lines.

laboratories to current standards

- Launch a dual-credit "Manufacturing Fast Track" for regional high schools to improve the recruitment pipeline
- Develop an Industrial Maintenance Technician (IMT) specialty focused on high-speed confectionery automation
- Create a competency-based credit-for-prior-learning system for incumbent workers at regional manufacturing hubs
- Establish a "Train the Trainer" program using industry experts from Ferrero and Rivian as adjunct instructors

90-DAY NEXT STEPS

- 1 Formalize the equipment procurement list for Fanuc and PLC controller upgrades based on Ferrero's new production lines
- 2 Submit a request for an additional full-time tenure-track faculty position in Advanced Manufacturing
- 3 Host an "Apprenticeship Signing Day" event to highlight the 26 new apprentices to regional media
- 4 Analyze the first IMT cohort's graduation data to refine recruitment strategies for the next enrollment cycle
- 5 Verify dual-credit alignment with the McLean County Area Vocational Center to address capacity constraints

Recommended Portfolio Strategy

1

Industrial Maintenance & PLC Automation Accelerator

Directly addresses Ferrero's \$460 million expansion and current workforce deficits in machining and maintenance. Establishes the apprenticeship foundation for future phases.

2

Mobility & EV Assembly Workforce Expansion

Scales Phase 1 apprenticeship models into the automotive sector to align with Rivian's planned expansion and the growth of Tier 2 suppliers across "EV Alley."

3

EV Alley Battery & Grid Systems Modernization

Positions HCC for long-term leadership in high-level diagnostics and infrastructure management — moving beyond assembly to ensure HCC remains the central workforce engine for the evolving regional economy.

Institutional Readiness



Strengths

HCC exhibits high institutional readiness, driven by its \$17.5M Advanced Manufacturing Center and \$13.5M Agriculture Complex — providing high-fidelity training environments that are the envy of regional peers. The institution has a demonstrated ability to manage large state and federal awards, including a \$7.5M DCEO grant and recent NSF ATE funding. Leadership under the Dean of CTE



Challenges

The institution faces a critical human capital challenge. Lead faculty in Advanced Manufacturing and Energy sectors are currently at instructional capacity, limiting their ability to engage in intensive curriculum redesign or grant-funded initiatives without significant support. Long-term program sustainability requires expanding full-time faculty rosters and adding dedicated grant management staff.

maintains trust-based relationships with Rivian and Ferrero North America.

Areas Worth Monitoring

Cybersecurity

High-potential area given the insurance hub presence (State Farm / COUNTRY Financial) and HCC's existing SOC Analyst pathway. HCC has already invested in cybersecurity training in response to regional ransomware threats.

Precision Agriculture

Emerging cluster supported by the new \$13.5M Agriculture Complex and strong regional demand for technology-integrated farming solutions across McLean County.

Construction & Utility Trades

The \$170M regional water system project suggests significant potential for expanding specialized construction trades and utility technician programs in the near term.

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