



BIG BETS FOR AMERICA

One series, three cities.

Innovation, leadership, and renewal aren't concentrated in one geography — they're alive across regions, systems, and communities.

THREADING THROUGH ALL THREE STOPS: THE AMERICAN DREAM · FOOD IS MEDICINE · AI FOR HUMAN POTENTIAL

IN THIS RECAP

THE SERIES

OKLAHOMA CITY

BALTIMORE

CLEVELAND

WHAT'S NEXT

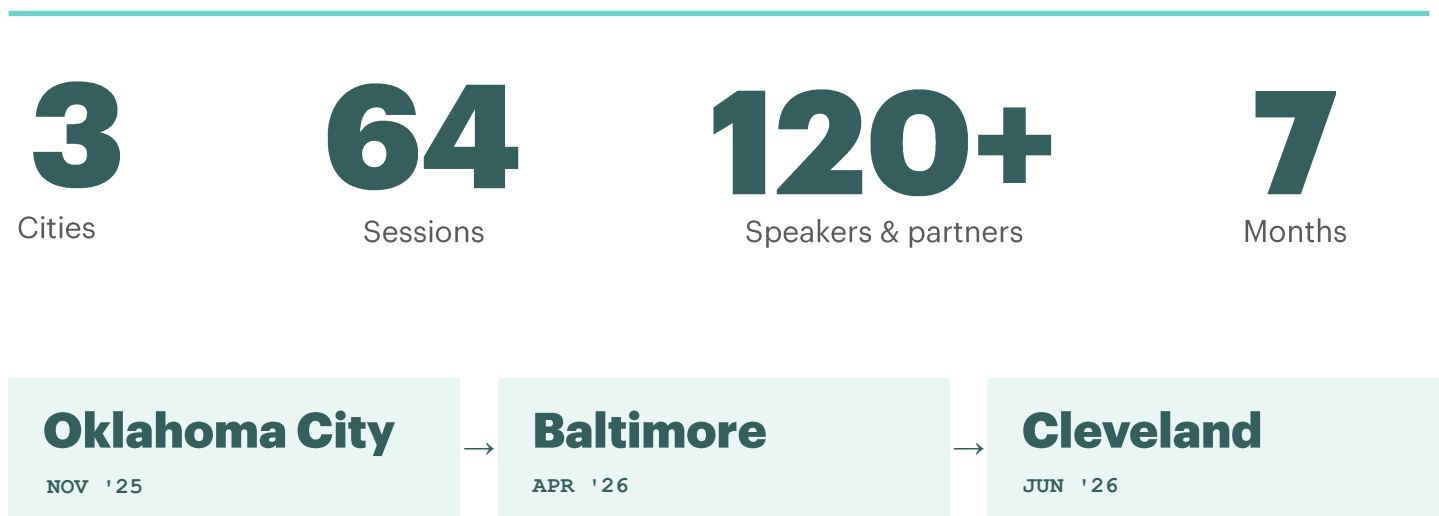
Oklahoma City → **Baltimore** → **Cleveland**

NOVEMBER 2025 – JUNE 2026

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Big Bets for America set out to prove that innovation, leadership, and renewal are not concentrated in one geography — they're alive across regions, systems, and communities. Across Oklahoma City, Baltimore, and Cleveland, governors, mayors, philanthropists, and community leaders shared a stage to put that idea to the test: cities reinvent fastest when local leadership, capital, and community move together, and that model holds city after city, regardless of size or region. Each stop carried its own throughline — Heartland investment readiness, Baltimore's culture and vacancy economics, Cleveland's comeback.

“ *The format held everywhere: government, philanthropy, and community shared one stage, commitments followed, and the ideas moved faster because of it.* ”



Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma • November 2025 • West Village District



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Oklahoma City



As the inaugural convening, Oklahoma City set the tone for the series — planting Big Bets for America in the Heartland to prove that ambition lives far beyond the coasts. Hosted in the revitalized West Village District and anchored by the partnership with Heartland Forward, it paired Governor Kevin Stitt and Mayor David Holt with economic-development leaders from Enid, Perry, and Hutchinson/Reno County, spanning The American Dream, Food is Medicine, defense innovation, investment readiness, and AI for human potential.

STANDOUT SESSION

Reimagining the American Dream

9:15 AM • KEVIN STITT, GOVERNOR OF OKLAHOMA

Fifteen minutes into the series' first convening, Governor Stitt put the American Dream commitment in a sitting governor's own words — before the day's first break.

Oklahoma City — Full Schedule

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
MORNING		
9:00 AM	Opening & Welcome	Angie Cooper, Heartland Forward • Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, The Rockefeller Foundation
9:15 AM	Reimagining the American Dream	Kevin Stitt, Governor of Oklahoma
9:30 AM	rootEd in the Heartland	Angie Cooper, Heartland Forward • Noa Meyer, BDT & MSD
9:45 AM	Whole of Health in the Heartland	Angie Cooper, Heartland Forward • Sharmila Makhija, AWSOM
10:05 AM	Oklahoma Leaning into Food is Medicine	Derek Kilmer, The Rockefeller Foundation • Cynthia Rollins, FreshRx Oklahoma • Elisabeth Thao, The Family Garden LLC • Dr. Marianna Wetherill, OU Culinary Medicine
10:27 AM	Reimagining Relief: A New Chapter for CARE's US Impact	Greg Behrman, NationSwell • Michelle Nunn, CARE
10:40 AM	Defense Innovation and Investment	John Nash, Acorn Capital Management • Jay Harrison, Xtremis • Todd Pauley, The Boeing Company • Tim Maul, Balerion Space Ventures
11:05 AM	What Makes a Community Investment Ready?	Warwick Sabin, Deep South Today • David Holt, Mayor, Oklahoma City
11:22 AM	Accelerating Economic Success in the Heartland	Arielle Gurman, BlackRock Charitable Foundation
11:30 AM	Community Voices: Center for Investment Readiness	Krista Cupp, Heartland Forward • Debra Teufel, Hutchinson/Reno Co. Chamber • Dr. Marcie Mack, Enid Regional Dev. Alliance • Melanie McGuire, City of Perry
AFTERNOON		
12:00 PM	Ideas to Action Lunches (concurrent): Future of Work • AI for Human Potential • Healthy Communities • Investing in People	
1:45 PM	AI Meets Capital: Rethinking How We Discover and Fund Innovation	Mike Malone, Heartland Forward / Economic Leadership LLC • Madison Faulkner, NEA
2:00 PM	U.S. Big Bets Fellows: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures	Jennifer Hankins, Tulsa Innovation Labs
2:10 PM	The Rockefeller Foundation: Commitment to Action	Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, The Rockefeller Foundation
2:15 PM	Unlocking Public Value: Government Levers for Responsible AI	Derek Kilmer, The Rockefeller Foundation • Shawnzia A. Thomas, Georgia Technology Authority • Denise Reilly-Hughes, State of Vermont
2:38 PM	Harnessing the Power of AI in the Heartland	Maria Curi, Axios • Maab Ibrahim, Google • Taylor Shead, Stemuli • Tonya Witherspoon, NIRDТ
3:00 PM	AI Announcement	Angie Cooper, Heartland Forward
3:10 PM	Closing	Angie Cooper, Heartland Forward • Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, The Rockefeller Foundation
3:30 PM	Networking & Reception	

Baltimore

Baltimore, Maryland • April 2026



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Baltimore



Baltimore marked the shift to the Mid-Atlantic and the series' clearest test of the thesis that cities reinvent when government, philanthropy, and community move together — opening with Governor Wes Moore and Mayor Brandon Scott. Culture and sport were treated as economic strategy, not amenities, alongside hard-edged sessions on turning vacancy into generational wealth. It was the most diverse convening of the series by a wide margin.

STANDOUT SESSION

From Vision to Delivery: How Government and Philanthropy Deliver Results

9:00 AM • DR. RAJIV SHAH, RF • GOV. WES MOORE, MARYLAND • DERAY MCKESSON, CAMPAIGN ZERO

Baltimore opened with its governor, The Rockefeller Foundation's president, and Campaign Zero's DeRay Mckesson sharing one stage — government, philanthropy, and organizing voice, on the same page before the day's first break.

Baltimore — Full Schedule

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
MORNING		
9:00 AM	From Vision to Delivery: How Government and Philanthropy Deliver Results	Dr. Rajiv Shah, The Rockefeller Foundation • Gov. Wes Moore, Maryland • DeRay Mckesson, Campaign Zero
9:35 AM	From Farm to Food is Medicine	Meena Seshamani, MD Dept. of Health • Tom McDougall, 4P Foods • Roseline Ifidon, Work Opportunities Unlimited • Devon Klatell, The Rockefeller Foundation
9:55 AM	Culture Builds Cities: Why Art Is a Growth Strategy	Derrick Adams, Charm City Cultural Cultivation • Asma Naeem, Baltimore Museum of Art • Harold Steward, New England Foundation for the Arts • Mark Anthony Thomas, Greater Baltimore Committee
10:10 AM	A New Jobs Playbook: Aligning Capital, Policy, and Talent	Derek Kilmer, The Rockefeller Foundation • Astead Herndon, Vox • Marisa Flowers, Greater Washington Partnership
10:45 AM	Opening Doors, Expanding Opportunities	Meg Fosque, The Rockefeller Foundation • Dr. Shanaysha Sauls, Baltimore Community Foundation • Tonia Wellons, Greater Washington Community Foundation • Rachel Garbow Monroe, Weinberg Foundation
11:00 AM	More Than a Game: How Sports Leaders Build Cities	Torrey Smith, Philanthropist • Catie Griggs, Baltimore Orioles • D. Watkins, Author/Filmmaker
11:20 AM	Baltimore Rising: Turning Vacancy into a Generational Wealth Engine	Fagan Harris, Abell Foundation • Beth Blauer, Johns Hopkins University • Terrance Smith, Baltimore City • Bree Jones, Parity Homes
11:40 AM	Announcement: Greater Baltimore Committee	Mark Anthony Thomas, Greater Baltimore Committee
11:43 AM	From Momentum to Commitment: A Call to Action	Kevin Plank, Under Armour
AFTERNOON		
12:00 PM	Concurrent: Unlocking Baltimore (Housing) • The Maryland Model • Networking Lunch	
1:30 PM	Investing in Baltimore's Future: Leadership & Capital in Action	Brandon Scott, Mayor, Baltimore • Raymond J. McGuire, Lazard
1:40 PM	Designing the Next Chapter of American Cities: Conversations between Mayors	Brandon Scott, Mayor, Baltimore • Justin Bibb, Mayor, Cleveland • Raymond J. McGuire, Lazard
1:55 PM	The New Conventional: Entrepreneurship, Capital & Community Wealth	Quentin Vennie, The Equitea Co. • Beatrice Dixon, The Honey Pot Company • David Hall, Revolution
2:10 PM	Scaling Climate Solutions Across America	Matt Petersen, LACI • Emily Knight, The Engine • Kate Frucher, The Clean Fight • Matthew Dolan, The Banner
2:30 PM	Reimagining Government: The Operational Playbook for AI Deployment	Tina Walha, U.S. Digital Response • Cassandra Madison, Center for Civic Futures • Patrick McLoughlin, Maryland Benefits • Kumar Garg, Renaissance Philanthropy
2:50 PM	From Capital to Community: The Future of Philanthropy	Michelle Moore, Groundswell • Jessica Ennis, Invest in Our Future • Dwayne Montaque, The Rockefeller Foundation/RFCC • Stacy Palmer, Chronicle of Philanthropy
3:10 PM	Where Health, Workforce, and Community Meet	Ja'Ron Bridges, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield • Sarah Szanton, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing • Patrick Mutch, Chase Brexton Health Care • Steve Clemons, The National Interest
3:30 PM	US Big Bets Fellows Announcement	Colby Hall, Craft Philanthropy
3:35 PM	From Legacy to Reinvention: Building a Sustainable Future for Local News	Audrey Cooper, The Banner • Alexis Taylor, AFRO American Newspapers
3:50 PM	Why Baltimore, Why Now	Otis Rolley, Baltimore Development Corporation • Calvin Young, Mayor's Office
4:00 PM	Closing Reception	

Cleveland

Cleveland, Ohio • June 2026



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Cleveland

CLEVELAND
Foundation

DESTINATION
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The
BlackRock
Foundation

Huntington Bank

KeyBank



Cleveland carried the deepest symbolic weight — the city where John D. Rockefeller was raised and is buried, making it both origin story and proving ground. Opening with an impactful performance from Apostle Jones and Karamu House Creative Director Tony Sias, and threaded by NBC's Al Roker, it framed Cleveland as "the next great American comeback." Uniquely in the series, it moved participants out of the ballroom and into the city through afternoon site visits.

STANDOUT SESSION

The Long Game: Literacy and Ohio's Economic Future

9:50 AM • GOV. MIKE DEWINE, OHIO • FRAN DEWINE, FIRST LADY OF OHIO • AL ROKER, NBC NEWS

NBC's Al Roker anchored the Cleveland stage, here pairing Ohio's Governor and first lady on literacy as economic strategy — setting the stage for a major announcement to follow led by the Governor .

Cleveland — Full Schedule

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
MORNING		
9:00 AM	Welcome	Tony Sias, Karamu House
9:05 AM	Why Cleveland, Why Now	David Gilbert, Destination Cleveland
9:10 AM	The New Cleveland Era: Building a City Ready for What's Next	Justin Bibb, Mayor, Cleveland
9:25 AM	The Next Great American Comeback Starts Here	Lillian Kuri, Cleveland Foundation • Frederick R. Nance, Squire Patton Boggs • Al Roker, NBC News
9:40 AM	The New Industrial Playbook: Site Readiness, Capital, Competitiveness	Catherine O'Malley Kearney, KeyBank • Ken Biberaj, Savills • Ahmed Abonamah, Rock Entertainment / Cleveland Cavaliers
9:50 AM	The Long Game: Literacy and Ohio's Economic Future	Gov. Mike DeWine, Ohio • Fran DeWine, First Lady of Ohio • Al Roker, NBC News
10:10 AM	From Classroom to Career: Building Ohio's Talent Pipeline	Gov. Mike DeWine, Ohio • J.P. Nauseef, JobsOhio • Al Roker, NBC News
10:20 AM	Building for Tomorrow: Leadership, Partnership and Regional Growth	Jay Turakhia, Huntington Bank • Whitney Haslam Johnson, Haslam Sports Group • Robin Gibbs, Social Finance
10:35 AM	Built to Make What's Next: Manufacturing, Innovation & Entrepreneurship	Carey Jaros, Clorox Purell • Drew Anderson, Cleveland Kitchen • Melissa Butler, The Lip Bar • Jay Bailey, H.J. Russell Innovation Center
10:50 AM	Deal Ready Cleveland: Investing in the Future of American Cities	Justin Bibb, Mayor, Cleveland • Shanelle Smith Whigham, KeyBank
11:10 AM	What Becomes Possible	DeRay McKesson, Campaign Zero
11:15 AM	Building What's Next: Philanthropy, Partnership and the Future of Opportunity	Lillian Kuri, Cleveland Foundation • Dr. Rajiv Shah, The Rockefeller Foundation • DeRay McKesson, Campaign Zero
11:30 AM	Young Voices, Fresh Eyes — Documenting Cleveland from the Inside	Nzinga Young, @veganzinga • Clare Caywood, @clarearline • Quartez Harris, Poet/Author
11:45 AM	Changing the Game: Women's Sports as a Catalyst	Allison Howard, WNBA CLE • Elizabeth Yee, The Rockefeller Foundation
AFTERNOON		
12:00 PM	Building America's Workforce Advantage	Derek Kilmer, The Rockefeller Foundation • Steve Stivers, Ohio Chamber of Commerce • Baiju Shah, Greater Cleveland Partnership
12:15 PM	Anchoring in Community: Design, Belonging and Neighborhood Impact	Lillian Kuri, Cleveland Foundation • Pascale Sablan, The Third Office • Alyse Archer-Coité, Apple
12:30 PM	Lunch + Reception	
1:30 PM	Site Visits (concurrent): Campaign Zero Juvenile Detention Center • Cleveland Clinic Global Peak Performance Center • Rockefeller Legacy Tour • Site Readiness (x2) • Waterfront	
3:30 PM	Reclaiming the Waterfront: Cleveland's Next Front Door	Gabriel Whaley, MSCHF • David Gilbert, Destination Cleveland
3:40 PM	Launching Cleveland's Next Generation of AI Entrepreneurs	Taylor Shead, Stemuli
3:45 PM	Big Bets Fellow Spotlight: Rewiring the Job Search for the AI Era	Serena Jezior, Greater Cleveland Works
3:50 PM	Healthy People, Healthy Workforce	Claire Casey, AARP Foundation • Tosin Goje, Cleveland Clinic • Imad Najm, Cleveland Clinic • Karen Andres, The Aspen Institute
4:05 PM	Powering Ohio's Future: Building the Skilled Workforce	Missy Henriksen, CEWD • Rebecca J. Anderson, McKinsey Global Institute • Anne Richards, Goodwill Industries • Arielle Gurman, BlackRock Foundation
4:30 PM	Closing Reception	

WHAT'S NEXT

The series continues in 2027.

Host cities and dates for the next chapter of Big Bets for America are still being finalized. Thank you to the partners, funders, and civic leaders across Oklahoma City, Baltimore, and Cleveland who made the first three stops possible.



BIG BETS FOR AMERICA · A SNAPSHOT OF THE SERIES