

Policy & Advocacy Committee

2026 Action Summary

Purpose

The Policy & Advocacy Committee was established to better understand the issues affecting communities across the Tri-State region while creating opportunities for regional dialogue and shared learning.

The Opportunity

As Tri-State Development looked toward the next three to five years, the Advisory Board identified the regional issues where the organization could provide the greatest value through education, collaboration, and information sharing. While transportation, infrastructure, and agriculture quickly emerged as priorities, discussion also reinforced that issues such as housing, childcare, healthcare, education, broadband, and workforce development are deeply interconnected and play an important role in the region's long-term success.

Rather than addressing these topics individually, the committee recognized the importance of examining them through the broader lens of rural economic development.

Learning from Regional Leaders

Throughout the year, the committee welcomed regional leaders, practitioners, partner organizations, and subject matter experts who are actively addressing these issues in communities across Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa. Rather than focusing solely on challenges, each presentation highlighted real-world experiences, innovative approaches, and lessons learned that could inform and inspire other communities throughout the region.

These discussions not only expanded the committee's understanding of regional issues but also created new connections among participants, encouraging continued collaboration beyond the committee meetings.

Looking Beyond State Lines

One of the committee's greatest strengths is its ability to bring together perspectives from three states. While communities often face similar challenges, the approaches they take to address those challenges can differ significantly. By learning from one another, communities gain access to new ideas, successful initiatives, and practical solutions that may be adapted to meet local needs.

The committee recognized that innovation is already happening throughout the region. Bringing those stories together creates opportunities for communities to learn from one another rather than working in isolation.

Building Regional Resources

Throughout the year, committee discussions focused on **housing and workforce housing, childcare, broadband, and entrepreneurship**. Each discussion served as the foundation for a corresponding issue brief, capturing key information, regional examples, and available resources so the conversations could continue beyond the committee meetings.

Together, these briefs will form the foundation of a growing resource library that will continue to support future Regional Issues Summits and provide communities with practical information they can reference long after the discussions conclude.

From Committee to Regional Issues Summit Series

This realization laid the foundation for Tri-State Development's Regional Issues Summit Series, expanding these conversations beyond committee meetings and creating opportunities for a broader audience of community leaders, businesses, educators, service providers, and regional partners to learn, share ideas, and explore collaborative solutions.

The work of the Policy & Advocacy Committee reinforced Tri-State Development's role as a trusted regional convener, bringing together diverse perspectives, encouraging meaningful dialogue, and helping communities learn from one another. As these conversations continue through the Regional Issues Summit Series, the focus will remain on sharing practical ideas, highlighting successful initiatives, and strengthening communities across the Tri-State region.

Additional Resources

- Issue Briefs