



CEDAR RAPIDS METRO
ECONOMIC
ALLIANCE

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Q4 2025

President & CEO's Note

Juliet Abdel



2025 was a year of change for the Economic Alliance.

New leadership, a renewed commitment to our core competencies, strategic additions to our team, and shifts in the political landscape each had an impact on our organization and the members we serve. It is in times like these that collaboration matters most—and we delivered.

In 2025, we focused on advocating for the conditions that enable economic growth because growth determines whether businesses can meaningfully impact the livelihoods of their employees and the communities they serve. We engaged at the local, state, and federal levels, including leading the charge on a local bond initiative and organizing a regional D.C. Fly-In to meet directly with our federal delegation about the projects and priorities that matter most to our region. We partnered with national allies to advocate for the permanent extension of pro-growth tax provisions for small businesses. We also pushed back on tariffs that we believed limited opportunity, increased costs, and created uncertainty for employers. As the first organization in the Midwest to take this step, we opened direct lines of communication with Canadian leaders, traveling to Ottawa to reinforce the importance of strong cross-border relationships and continued economic partnership.

In economic development, we continued to prioritize support for our existing industries through frequent in-field visits, strategic follow-ups aligned with expansion plans, and direct connections to critical resources. At the same time, when some companies faced layoffs, we moved quickly, collaborating with state partners, to

support affected employees in finding new career opportunities within our region. We also launched our first job attraction campaign, exceeding our population growth goal sooner than anticipated and reinforcing our commitment to increasing our workforce population.

Underpinning all of our work is a shared conviction: driving economic growth for our region. In 2025, we expanded our legislative efforts and formally launched The Collective Voice, a collaborative brand built around an inclusive vision and shared policy priorities. By convening like-minded organizations and building coalitions of business leaders across the Cedar Rapids region, we demonstrated the strength and unity of our business community.

Of course, the success of this work depends on the strength of the Chamber itself. This year, we took a thoughtful look at our programs and events, letting go of those that delivered less value and investing more deeply in initiatives that provide meaningful return for our partners. I am grateful for your continued trust in us, and me, as we sharpen our focus and strengthen our impact.

As we enter 2026, we have an opportunity to be in the driver's seat to boldly lead and shape our region's future. The Economic Alliance is ready for this moment. Enjoy our Q4 Management Report and see the progress your partnership has made possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Abdel".

Juliet Abdel, President & CEO

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cedar Rapids and Iowa maintain strong and longstanding economic ties with Canada. For example, Quaker Oats sources 100 percent of its oats from Canada. In addition, Canadian National Railway strengthened its presence in Iowa and Cedar Rapids through the acquisition of Iowa Northern Railway two years ago.

The Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance team was invited to Canada for an opportunity to dialogue about tariff impacts and ways to mitigate their impact. Both Juliet Abdel and Ron Corbett made the trip in November to conduct these visits.



Leaders from chambers and economic development organizations across Iowa came together through the Iowa Chamber Alliance, a statewide pro-business advocacy group, to identify and build consensus on the state policy priorities for 2026. Through collaborative discussion and shared input from across the state, the Chamber Alliance members, including the Economic Alliance, agreed to focus on key areas that support long-term economic growth. This included talent attraction and workforce development, economic development tools and a competitive business climate, infrastructure investment, and policies that strengthen communities and make Iowa an attractive place to live and work.

NEXTERA - DUANE ARNOLD

Juliet Abdel, CEO and Jeff Pomeranz City Manager of the City of Cedar Rapids seized the opportunity to better understand Nextera's operations by seeing their full campus in Florida. A full day was spent understanding the extent of services Nextera has to offer.

Recognizing substantial economic impact, the Economic Alliance supports NextEra in its effort to reopen the Duane Arnold nuclear facility by early 2029. Reopening the facility would add clean power to the grid, create more than 500 new jobs, and generate property tax revenue for local schools and government. This highlights why this initiative is more than just producing electricity. The facility's significance is further emphasized by Google's recent partnership with NextEra to provide power for a second data center in the region. Google's first data center complex is currently under construction on property west of Edgewood Road and north of 76th Avenue in southwest Cedar Rapids.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

As part of the redevelopment programs offered to developers in Iowa, tax credits for redeveloping properties known as brownfield and grayfield sites are awarded annually. In September, Cedar Rapids developers were the recipients of (3) awards for housing development projects, with two receiving the grayfield and a final receiving the brownfield. The projects are a blend with two being purely residential and one being a mixed-use building with some commercial offerings. True to the program goal of maintaining economic health and cleaning

up eyesores in the community, (2) of these projects are focused on redevelopment / rehabilitation with (1) being new construction.



The Collective Voice is a region-wide engagement effort by the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance to gather input from employers and community

partners across Eastern Iowa. Through surveys and conversations with more than 200 representatives from 28 communities, and input from more than 1,200 investors, the Economic Alliance shaped a unified public policy agenda that reflects the real needs of businesses of all sizes.

That feedback became the basis for The Collective Voice brand and the 2026 legislative priorities, giving policymakers one clear, coordinated message about what the regional economy needs to grow and compete. The Economic Alliance is joined by Benton Development Group, Cedar County Economic Development, Hiawatha Economic Development Corporation, Iowa County Community Development, Jones County Economic Development, Marion Chamber of Commerce, Marion Economic Development Corporation, Robins Economic Development Initiative and Washington Economic Development Group.

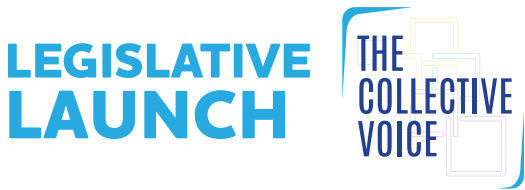
Priority highlights include:

- **Talent Development** – Investing in education,

workforce training, and industry partnerships.

- **Workforce Population Growth** – Supporting policies that expand Iowa’s workforce.
- **Economic Growth & Tax Competitiveness** – Advancing balanced tax structures that support business vitality.
- **Global Competitiveness** – Supporting export expansion, supply chain resilience, and international investment.
- **Housing Availability** – Increasing funding and reforms to expand housing opportunities.

In addition, we published a nonpartisan voter guide for the 2025 election, equipping the business community with timely candidate information and voting resources. In December, we hosted a delegation of mayors from the Ivory Coast through the Global Ties Iowa program, strengthening international connections and economic diplomacy.



More than 100 business and community leaders from across Eastern Iowa gathered for the annual Legislative Launch, where the region’s 2026 state and federal public policy priorities were unveiled. Shaped by broad regional input, the agenda reflects the shared voice of employers and stakeholders working to strengthen a competitive, economically vibrant region.

The evening underscored the value of regional collaboration, civil dialogue, and strong partnerships with elected officials. Local, state, and federal leaders joined the business community to discuss the issues shaping the region’s future and to reaffirm a shared commitment to progress.

CELEBRATING CONNECTIONS

Membership pays with valuable connections. In Q4 2025, The Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance and its ambassadors celebrated 14 business milestones with ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings. Three BizMix networking events were also held at unique member businesses in Q4 with more than 450 members in attendance.



The ImpactCR *Mentorship Program* connects young professionals with experienced community leaders for intentional, goal-driven mentorship. Designed to support professional growth, leadership development, and meaningful community connection, this six-month program helps emerging leaders build skills, confidence, and relationships that strengthen our regional workforce.

As part of the Economic Alliance’s broader workforce development efforts, this program invests in people — ensuring the Cedar Rapids

region continues to attract, retain, and grow talent across industries. Learn more online cedarapids.org/workforce/impactcr.

TRAILING SPOUSE PROGRAM

The Trailing Spouse Program connects partners of new or prospective employees with hiring employers throughout the Cedar Rapids region. The goal is to help families transition smoothly and strengthen our community through workforce retention.

Employers can participate by submitting information about the trailing spouse or partner:

- Submit the trailing spouse or partner’s resume and a summary of career goals.
- Send the information to one of the Economic Alliance listed contacts.
- The Economic Alliance shares resumes with participating area employers
- Employers review and contact applicants directly if interested.
- When a hire occurs, employers should notify the Economic Alliance to measure impact.

Learn more about how to engage online cedarapids.org/workforce/talent-attraction-retention



To commemorate the 35th anniversary of Mercy Medical Center's Especially for You® Race Against Breast Cancer, the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance joined Mercy and community leaders for a special ribbon-cutting celebration. The event symbolized 35 years of community commitment in the fight against breast cancer and kicked off the Power of Pink ahead of the October 5 race. Economic Alliance President & CEO Juliet Abdel

served as a ceremonial speaker, marking the milestone and highlighting the impact of the EFY Fund, which has supported nearly 15,400 individuals with breast and gynecological cancer screenings and services. It was a meaningful moment of pride before thousands of runners and survivors took to the streets in celebration and solidarity.

AbbeHealth Services and UnityPoint Health celebrated the opening of the new Abbe Center for Community Mental Health at 615 Fifth Street SE in downtown Cedar Rapids with a recent ribbon cutting. The renovated 31,000+ square foot facility expands access to behavioral health care, strengthening support for our workforce, families, and business community. The Abbe Center offers therapy and psychiatric care, primary care, Same Day Access for mental health and substance use evaluations, crisis services, outreach, group programming, and peer support. Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell spoke at the event, highlighting the importance of accessible mental health care to our region's wellbeing and economic vitality.

Cedar Rapids IowaWORKS celebrated its new facility with an open house and ribbon cutting on Thursday, November 20. The new location brings together Kirkwood Community College workforce development programs, vocational rehabilitation services, and the IowaWORKS Cedar Rapids office under one roof, creating a more coordinated system to support employers and current and future workers. The space will also serve as the future home of Kirkwood's Adult Education and Literacy programs,

further strengthening our region's talent pipeline. Speakers included Iowa Workforce Development Director Beth Townsend, Kirkwood President Kristie Fisher, Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell, and Economic Alliance President and CEO Juliet Abdel, all highlighting the importance of workforce collaboration to our region's economic growth.



Good Morning Cedar Rapids! returned this past November with an energizing and entertaining morning that brought a record 755 attendees to celebrate local business excellence and civic impact. Held at the DoubleTree by Hilton Cedar Rapids, the annual breakfast gathering welcomed attendees for laughs, inspiration, and meaningful recognition of organizations shaping our region.

Presented by Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust and hosted by Clare Duffy and Eric Hanson of KZIA Z102.9's Morning Scramble, the event delivered far more than a traditional breakfast. Musical performances, engaging entertainment, and heartfelt stories set the stage for honoring outstanding businesses

through the 2025 BRAVO Awards and Community Spotlight recognitions.

The 2025 BRAVO Award winners—Fun Not Fancy Restaurant Group, JRS Pharma, and SwineTech—were recognized for their innovation, leadership, and deep commitment to Cedar Rapids. Community Spotlight honors celebrated the lasting impact of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa, Horizons, and Theatre Cedar Rapids for their decades of service and dedication to strengthening lives and connections across the region.



During the first phase of the Collaborative Growth Initiative the Cedar Rapids region experienced strong results through the MakeMyMove talent attraction program, with a successful campaign concluding at the end of October, two months ahead of the projected timeframe. The initiative attracted 30 new residents—21 adults and nine children—across 15 households, with 10 households relocating to Cedar Rapids, four to Marion, and one to Hiawatha. These relocations are projected to generate \$1.6 million in annual economic impact and approximately \$147,000 in state and local tax revenue. Participants had

an average age of 41 and an average household size of 2.3, with 66% relocating with a spouse, more than half of whom are now employed locally. Additionally, 36% of households included children, supporting long-term community growth.



The fourth quarter of 2025 was a busy and meaningful one for the Leadership for Five Seasons (LFS) Program, bringing together youth participants, adult class members, and alumni for hands-on learning and connection.

Both the Youth and Adult Classes of 2026 explored the region's history and agricultural roots through immersive programming. In September, History Days included tours of Brucemore Mansion and The History Center, downtown walking tours, legacy speeches, and interactive activities that brought local stories to life. October's Agriculture Days offered behind-the-scenes looks at area farms, horticulture and ag businesses, and food producers—highlighting the vital role agriculture plays in our regional economy.

In Q4, the Executive LFS cohort deepened its understanding of the Cedar Rapids business ecosystem through direct engagement with corporate operations, entrepreneurial leaders, and regional infrastructure partners. Participants

toured Nordstrom's local fulfillment operations, explored small business innovation at NewBo City Market, and gained insight into the economic impact of the Eastern Iowa Airport. Conversations with leaders connected to Iowa Startup Accelerator and NewBoCo reinforced the strength of the region's entrepreneurial support system.



The cohort also participated in a November social designed to showcase the vibrancy of the community for these new-to-the-area executives, beginning with dinner and city views at 350 First and continuing with a live performance at CSPS Hall—a local arts and culture gem in one of Cedar Rapids' most dynamic neighborhoods.

Collectively, Q4 programming strengthened participants' understanding of how corporate scale, startup innovation, infrastructure, and cultural assets intersect to drive regional economic vitality and collaborative leadership.

Q4 also wrapped up with one of the program's most anticipated traditions: the LFS Alumni Holiday Breakfast on December 5. This annual gathering

brought alumni together to reconnect, enjoy breakfast and festivities, support the LFS Youth Program, and help fulfill a local nonprofit's holiday wish list. Attendees also heard from a recent LFS Youth graduate, underscoring the impact alumni support has in keeping the youth program free for students and schools, along with generous support from Collins Aerospace, Hills Bank & Trust, and food sponsor Big Grove Cedar Rapids.

Q4 showcased the continued strength and community impact of the Leadership for Five Seasons program as it heads into the new year.

DOWNTOWN COLLABORATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS



Downtown Cedar Rapids is ringing in 2026 with renewed energy that supports local businesses. This winter, the team implemented holiday sparkle and festive lighting, and collaborated with local artists like Taylor Jasso, to bring Window Wonderland cheer to window art installations around Downtown.

The maintenance team continues to keep sidewalks clear of snow and ice to ensure safe, welcoming access for everyone, and as we shift to spring, priorities will transition to preparing the district for warmer weather. Leadership remains committed to investing in the team's ongoing education and professional growth, ensuring they have the skills and support needed to keep Downtown Cedar Rapids tidy, safe, functional, and welcoming.

In addition to maintenance of the district, downtown placemaking, programming, and events continue to create vibrancy. Partnerships with community stakeholders support live music, public art projects, health and wellness initiatives like 5SeasonsFit, and activities that bring the entire community together. Highlights for 2026 include hosting the inaugural Cedar Rapids Marathon, launching a new spring music festival in the heart of downtown, and expanding collaborations with local high school students to create even more vibrant public art throughout the district.

This past year the Downtown Commission has welcomed two new business leaders, Landon Burg from OPN, and Robin Sempf from Alliant Energy. Both jumped in and started contributing right away. The Downtown Commission will also welcome another two new faces: Juliet Pae from Fix Salon, and Brittney Clarke from Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust.

We look forward to welcoming these new members, and their unique perspectives to the Downtown Commission. Given the Commission's

charter, we want to ensure representation of various perspectives from the district. Adding new voices helps us achieve this.

BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMMING DELIVERS PRACTICAL VALUE

Business Support programming continued to deliver practical value and strong engagement across the region. Our *Let's Get Down to Business* sessions addressed timely workforce and leadership topics, including Salary Updates and Local Market Trends with Robert Half, which drew 20 attendees, and Delivering Results Through Delegation with Brenda Meeker of Elevate Consulting, LLC, attended by 28 participants.

Connection and relationship-building remained a priority in Q4, highlighted by Speed Networking with 35 attendees and the Hiawatha Business Summit happy hour, which attracted 71 registrants. Together, these events strengthened peer connections, shared insights, and supported business growth across our member network.

THANKS TO OUR SMALL BUSINESS CONNECTION SPONSOR

MEDIACOMSM
BUSINESS

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES OFFER A COMPETITIVE RETIREMENT BENEFIT

Attracting and keeping great employees is a challenge for many small businesses. In the fourth quarter, a fifth small business joined the Economic Alliance 401(k) Group Employer Plan — an affordable, professionally managed retirement solution designed specifically with smaller employers in mind.

This pooled 401(k) plan, powered by Transamerica, allows participating employers to offer a meaningful retirement benefit without the cost or complexity of managing a standalone plan. By sharing administrative responsibilities across multiple employers, the plan helps reduce fees, streamline compliance, and shift many fiduciary duties away from individual businesses.

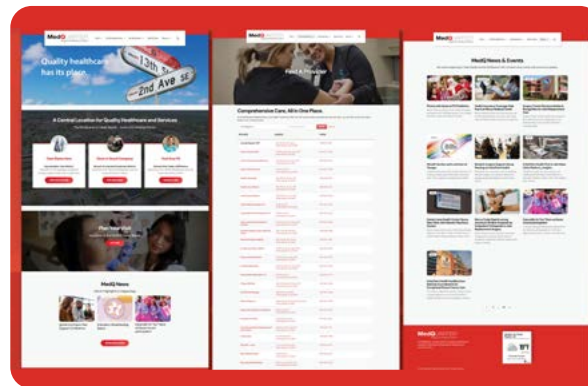
Why this matters for small employers:

- **Compete for talent.** Offering a 401(k) helps small businesses stand out when recruiting and retaining employees.
- **Boost engagement and loyalty.** Retirement benefits signal long-term investment in employees, encouraging them to stay and grow with the organization.
- **Lower administrative burden.** TAG Resources manages plan administration, compliance, and reporting.
- **Professional oversight.** The plan includes fiduciary and investment management support.
- **Employee-friendly tools.** Participants have access to online accounts, education resources,

and personalized support to help them plan for the future.

By making it easier to offer a high-quality retirement plan, this benefit helps small businesses strengthen employee engagement while focusing on what they do best — running and growing their organization.

Learn more about the 401(k) Group Employer Plan and how your business can participate at cedarapids.org.



The MedQuarter Regional Medical District has recently launched a fully redesigned website at www.themedq.com, creating a clearer, more intuitive online hub for patients, visitors, businesses, and community partners. Led by the MedQuarter Branding and Marketing Committee, the project focused on simplifying how users navigate and access information across the 55-square-block district. The streamlined design makes it faster to connect patients to care, residents to things to do, and businesses to the resources they need. As Executive Director Phil Wasta noted, the site was built to serve as a connector—bringing the

district's people, services, and opportunities together in one place.

[TheMedQ.com](https://www.themedq.com) now offers easy-to-use directories for health care providers and other district businesses, business and economic development resources, a “Things to Do” section highlighting dining, shopping, and experiences, and a centralized News & Events hub. Accessibility and usability were core priorities, with a fully responsive design and tools that support a wide range of user needs. Content will be kept current, ensuring the site remains a reliable, up-to-date resource that supports patients, families, visitors, and employers throughout The MedQuarter.

The MedQuarter is also looking to continue the momentum of public art in the district in 2026. Two murals were completed in 2025, and two more are slated for completion in 2026.

OUTGOING INNOVATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Each fall, we say goodbye to dedicated members of our four innovation councils and our Board of Directors. These groups provide critical advisory insight and overall governance to our organization, ensuring that our strategies remain relevant, forward-thinking, and aligned with community needs.

Our four Innovation Councils — the Workforce Innovation Council, Economic Development Innovation Council, Business Support Innovation Council, and Community Development Innovation Council — bring subject-matter expertise and industry perspective to key focus areas of our work.

Their input strengthens our programs, sharpens our priorities, and helps us remain responsive to the evolving needs of businesses and the broader community. Complementing this work, our Board of Directors provides overall oversight, fiduciary responsibility, and strategic direction to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

We thank the following outgoing members for their time, insight, and leadership and welcome new members who have been elected to serve, bringing fresh perspectives and new energy to these important roles.

Board of Directors

Hugh Ekberg
Nick Glew, FSB
Paula Land

Business Support Innovation Council

Dr. Isaac Reis, Atlas Chiropractic
Scott Hauser, Strategy Solutions, Inc.
Cherie Edilson, Member Marketplace
Ed Leighton-Dick, Kingfisher Data
Kyle Zimmerman, Guide Wealth Partners
Sammy Petersen, Bloomsbury Farm

Community Development Innovation Council

Amanda Zhorne, Craft'd
Brady Sawyer, Global Life
Ryan Bosch, Bosch Financial
Brad Joens, Hills Bank
Jim Miller, Horizons
Eric Hanson, KZIA
Maurice Davis, Marketing Growth Strategy

Economic Development Innovation Council

Tim Kinter, Ohnward Bank & Trust
Dean Houeshell, Innovative Coaching Strategies
Gavin McGrath, McGrath Family of Dealerships
Tyler McCarville, Kirkwood Comm College
Jason Hunt, Weitz
Don Woodruff, Woodruff Construction

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE'S 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS IS HERE

We're excited to share that the 2026 Calendar of Events is now available for our members. This year's lineup reflects a strong mix of familiar favorites and fresh energy, offering meaningful opportunities to connect, learn, and engage throughout the year.

As you review the calendar, you'll notice many of the programs you know and value returning — with several being re-imagined or retooled to better meet the needs of our members and the region. From networking and professional development to advocacy and community engagement, the 2026 calendar continues to reflect our commitment to supporting businesses and leaders at every stage.

We're also looking forward to sharing more details as new and evolving events draw closer, including National Civics Bee, Relish the Region, and the InterCity Visit, among others. [Get the 2026 Calendar of Events!](#)

HOST YOUR NEXT BUSINESS MEETING AT THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE



In the past quarter, our facility has been a hub of ideas, connections, and collaboration—hosting 543 business professionals across 57 meetings. Each gathering represents more than a room reservation; it's a space where our business community comes together to brainstorm, build relationships, and move ideas forward.

If you're looking for a convenient, professional space for your next business meeting, the Economic Alliance offers flexible conference room rentals designed to accommodate everything from small team gatherings to larger presentations and events.

Our facility features three conference rooms that can be configured to seat up to 100 attendees, making it easy to find the right fit for your meeting needs. Each room is equipped with video conferencing technology to support both in-person and hybrid meetings.

Meeting hosts benefit from competitive pricing with member discounts, convenient on-street metered parking and nearby ramp parking within one block. To check availability or receive a price quote, please contact our main office at 319-398-5317.

MARKET YOUR BUSINESS 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, the Economic Alliance will offer new sponsorship opportunities that allow members to elevate their visibility and connect directly with key audiences. Contact our team to learn more.



Pam Logue
*Investor Relations
Manager, Ambassador Lead*

WELCOMING AMBASSADORS

We are excited to welcome 14 new Ambassadors for 2026, bringing our total to more than 80! Economic Alliance Ambassadors play a big, welcoming role in supporting our community—they extend a warm welcome to new members, attend monthly BizMix events, participate in networking events, and join in the celebration of ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings. Ambassadors also help educate the community about the Economic Alliance and share ways for members to get more involved. Ambassadors are provided

exclusive access to the business community to make strategic, high-level connections.

Welcome, New Ambassadors!

- **Kris Berry**, Realty87
- **Hunter Schmidt**, CMIT Solutions of Cedar Rapids - Iowa City
- **Alyssa Davin**, Pigott
- **Thea Tyler**, CarePro Health Services
- **Jill Cejka**, Deafinitely Dogs!
- **Dan Kuenzi**, City Construction
- **Mackenzie Beals**, Rapids Foodservice
- **Kat Richter**, Skogman
- **Morgan Hames-Aldeman**, LAMAR
- **Stephen Banks**, CityWalk Eatery
- **Heidi Dolezal**, Saige Partners
- **Mitchell Ganzley**, Workspace Inc.
- **Susan Forinash**, Hall & Hall Engineers, Inc.
- **Greg Smith**, Rock Technology