



2026

Q1+Q2 MANAGEMENT REPORT



CEDAR RAPIDS METRO
**ECONOMIC
ALLIANCE**

WELCOME TO THE Q1+Q2 MANAGEMENT REPORT

As we close the second quarter of 2026, I am encouraged by the momentum we continue to see across our region and even more encouraged by what that momentum means for our future.

We are navigating a time of significant change. Businesses are adapting to workforce challenges, shifting markets and an evolving economic landscape. Yet our region continues to demonstrate resilience, a willingness to invest and a commitment to moving forward. That is one of our greatest strengths.

Our focus remains clear: **creating the conditions for businesses, workers and communities to succeed.** That means supporting business growth and investment, strengthening our workforce, and advocating for the infrastructure, housing and quality of life investments that make our region stronger and more competitive.

We also know this work cannot be done alone. Economic development is a team effort. It takes business, public-sector leaders, educators, nonprofits and community organizations working together to strengthen the people and places that make our region thrive.

We are proud of the progress we've made so far this year, but we measure success by more than initiatives launched or announcements made. We ask the questions that matter:

Are businesses growing and investing here? Are people finding pathways to opportunity? Are we strengthening the assets that will keep our region competitive for years to come?

Those are the measures that matter and they will continue to guide our work.

We're also looking ahead. We have begun work on our **Economic Prosperity Regional Roadmap**, introduced as *Collective Strength* at our last Annual Meeting. It takes a fresh look at where our region is today, where we want to go and what it will take to get there.

This is a conversation for our entire region. As the roadmap takes shape, we look forward to creating opportunities for businesses, nonprofits, community leaders, educators, public sector partners and residents to help inform the work and see themselves in our region's future.

There is a lot of good happening in our region and a lot of opportunities ahead. **Together, we are building momentum and helping shape what comes next.**



Sincerely,

Juliet Abdel

Juliet Abdel, President & CEO

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Membership and policy efforts in Q1 and Q2 focused on growing the Economic Alliance network, deepening investor engagement, and strengthening the region's business voice. The Economic Alliance welcomed 65 new members in the first half of 2026. A few notable additions include; KAJAT Properties, Goldfinch Tap & Eatery, Christian Brothers Automotive, Monarch Research, Galaxy Cleaning Services, Google, Executive Aero Club, Iowa Retirement Benefits & Solutions, Invenergy, Horizon Science Academy - Cedar Rapids, Mortenson, Holiday Inn Express – Marion, Samsung Semiconductor, Ellis House, Cedar Rapids Titans.

Investor participation remained strong, with 78 member organizations involved in the 2026 sponsorship campaign, including 19 small businesses. Sponsorship support helped enhance six existing programs and launch five new initiatives, while also backing four programs specifically designed to support small businesses.

The membership team also expanded direct outreach targeting 106 members for check-in meetings and touch-points. Welcome to our new Partnership Manager, David Miller, who is focused on strengthening the EA network.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Economic development efforts in Q1 and Q2 focused on business attraction, business retention, and strengthening the region's visibility with state, national, and international stakeholders. The Economic Alliance responded to RFPs and worked on a significant project pipeline, we hosted the Czech Republic Consul General, participated in the University of Iowa Space Lab tour, and led state legislators on an industrial tour of Cedar Rapids, and supported the Czech Economic Summit.

Business retention efforts remained a key priority, with Business Retention and Expansion visits exceeding annual goals. Employer themes highlight talent attraction, housing availability, and quality of life as critical factors for long-term competitiveness, while also reinforcing generally solid business conditions and continued optimism despite some tariff-related impacts.

Regional momentum was further strengthened by recent expansion and attraction from companies such as Sub-Zero, Samsung, and Sewer Equipment Company. The Alliance also supported long-term growth through housing and industry strategy work, including a Downtown Housing Study, Target Cluster discussion, and engagement with the Iowa Aviation Industry Partners on aerospace cluster development.



Business development and networking programming in Q1 and Q2 helped equip business professionals with timely insights, practical strategies, and valuable connections to support personal and professional growth. Through a mix of educational sessions and networking events, the Economic Alliance continued to create opportunities for members to learn from peers, strengthen relationships, and expand their professional networks.

The 2026 Let's Get Down to Business series launched in Q1 to support small business engagement, with its first session focused on practical AI use. Interested members can access our recorded program by contacting the EA today.



BizMix remained a signature networking platform, with six events held during the first half of the year averaging 156 attendees each. Key Q2 events nearing 150 in combined attendance through Building Connections: Speed Networking, the Hiawatha Business Summit and the Let's Get Down to Business session.

Community visibility and business connection opportunities remained a key focus. From January through June, the team hosted 6 B2B connection events with 938+ total BizMix attendees, along with 20 ribbon cuttings and 1 groundbreaking, attended by 263 ambassadors.

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE FOUNDATION

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Leadership for Five Seasons advanced leadership development in Q1 through adult, youth, and executive programming that connected participants to key community sectors and strengthened regional leadership capacity. The program delivered three adult program days, two youth program days, two executive program days, and one networking social, while nearly 70 adult and youth participants completed community-based service projects with local nonprofit partners.

Recruitment and pipeline-building also moved forward through youth outreach and five adult information sessions, generating 58 prospective registrations for the upcoming cohort. The adult Class of 2026 completed its class project in April in support of Tanager's Bright Foundations Therapeutic Child Care Center and graduated on May 8, while the youth Class of 2026 completed its service project at Eastern Iowa Arts Academy and graduated on March 25.

The program also completed recruitment for future cohorts, with 35 adult participants selected for the 2027 class from 56 applicants and 35 incoming juniors selected from eight area high schools for the youth 2026-27 program. In addition, the spring alumni lunch drew 55 attendees for a session on purpose-driven leadership.

Public policy efforts positioned the Economic Alliance as a strong advocate for a pro-business environment and a direct connector between members and policymakers. Across Q1 and Q2, the Alliance facilitated direct engagement with at least 19 state leaders through programming, while also representing the business community at four formal public hearings on key economic development projects.

The Alliance launched Capitol Conversations in three formats, drawing 160+ member attendees and 15 state lawmakers, and coordinated Collective Voice Day at the Capitol with 15 member participants and direct engagement with four key state leaders. The Collective Voice Capitol Reception brought together 125 attendees, including dozens of state lawmakers, to highlight Cedar Rapids Regional priorities.

This past legislative session, the Alliance tracked 174 bills introduced in the 2026 legislative session, with 206 bills passed and 200 signed into law, including HF2757, which we supported.

Local business visibility and spending were also supported through Restaurant Week and Buy 319 Day. Restaurant Week featured 22 participating restaurants, including eight first-time participants, and expanded awareness through influencer promotion and prize giveaways, while Buy 319 Day generated strong community attention through a formal proclamation and helped issue 144 Buy 319 Gift Cards worth more than \$10,000 to support 32 participating small businesses when redeemed.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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D.C. FLY-IN



At the federal level, the May D.C. Fly-In connected regional leaders with members of Congress, federal and diplomatic agencies to discuss our Collective Voice Legislative Agenda. 15 members including public officials, small businesses, large industry and non-profit organizations visited with 4 federal agencies, including White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, United States Trade Representative (USTR), Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank, and US Department of Transportation (DOT). They also had a visit at the Canadian Embassy and met with 4 elected officials including Sen. Grassley, Sen. Ernst, Rep. Hinson and Rep. Feenstra. The group focused on advancing federal policy priorities impacting the region including renewing the US-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) agreement, new trade programs, surface transportation reauthorization, completion of Tower Terrace Road, trucking regulations, the CID aerospace strategy, immigration/workforce, nuclear energy opportunities and housing affordability and availability.



Community activation and quality of life programming in Q1 focused on signature events that strengthened member engagement, supported small businesses, and brought the community together in ways that reinforce the Cedar Rapids Region as a great place to live, work, and visit. The Annual Meeting drew 1,021 registrants to hear organizational updates, recognize the Howard Hall Business in Excellence Award recipient (Pat McGrath), and feature remarks from the Consul General of Canada on Midwest economic growth.

**CEDAR RAPIDS
REGION**

The Collaborative Growth Initiative also advanced regional attraction efforts through the launch of a new relocation website, and the First Friends program was developed to provide new residents of our remote workers immersive campaign in-person and virtual connection opportunities. This program is set in the summer months.



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PRESENTED BY  CEDAR RAPIDS BANK & TRUST



Q2 programming continued to activate core districts and public spaces through the Farmers Market and the debut of Relish the Region. The Farmers Market season kicked off May 30 and drew average attendance of 12,600 per market across the first three markets, while Relish the Region attracted more than 200 attendees to its first tasting event on April 30, featuring 22 regional restaurants – congrats to CityWalk Eatery and Dash Coffee Roasters winners.

Workforce development efforts in Q1 and Q2 focused on talent attraction, retention, and pipeline building through new member resources and targeted programming. The Economic Alliance launched the ImpactCR Mentorship Program, creating a new platform to connect emerging talent with experienced community leaders in Q1, and finalized design of the newly created Accompanying Partner (Trailing Spouse) program. In Q2, we completed the framework for the IgniteCR Summer Internship Support Program with a refresh to programming.

ImpactCR generated strong early engagement, with about 100 people attending the April 1 kickoff and more than 30 mentorship pairings established. IgniteCR hosted its first event of the year in June with approximately 35 interns, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with all attendees reporting stronger connection and nearly all saying the experience expanded their professional network and confidence.

Public policy outreach also expanded through Policy in Action Tours, a newer program to help connect elected officials to our business community. The Lieutenant Governor and Senate Assistant Majority Leader/Transportation Chair were just a few of our guests. All Politics is Local podcast, with six episodes recorded featuring local leaders. The first Cedar Rapids Regional Civics Bee drew 37 student entries from 11 schools across five counties and six communities, helping build civic awareness and future workforce engagement.

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

DOWNTOWN CEDAR RAPIDS

MEDQUARTER REGIONAL MEDICAL DISTRICT



Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance's social channels and digital platforms continued to deliver strong reach in the first half of 2026, with Facebook leading overall visibility and LinkedIn and email driving consistent professional and member engagement.

Across Q1 and Q2, Facebook generated more than 409,000 views, with a significant jump in June that pushed Q2 above Q1 totals. Instagram delivered over 45,000 views across the first half of the year. Finally, LinkedIn impressions grew from 44,197 in Q1 to 48,738 in Q2.

Constant Contact campaigns drove an average open rate of each email campaign at 41%, continuing to provide a high-value touchpoint for members and stakeholders. If you are not receiving our emails or following us on social media channels, please do so to remain informed. Each platform is designed to share information in an audience engaging way.

The Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance YouTube channel generated 1,269 views and 56.3 hours of watch time, adding 12 subscribers during the reporting period. Content received 4,249 impressions with a 3.3% click-through rate. The channel's 3.3% impressions click-through rate is within YouTube's typical 2%–10% range, indicating viewers are clicking on content at a normal rate after seeing it.

Downtown Cedar Rapids advanced maintenance, beautification, and event readiness to support a clean, active, and welcoming downtown. Work focused on priority cleanup areas, landscaping improvements, operational preparation for the busy season, and added staffing capacity to support downtown upkeep. Downtown activity also continued to build through strong early momentum for the Cedar Rapids Marathon, support for major community events, \$24,000 in first-round event funding, and ongoing public art and placemaking efforts that strengthen visibility, vibrancy, and community use of downtown.

The MedQuarter Regional Medical District focused Q1 and Q2 on spring readiness and early implementation of the 2026 action strategies adopted by the Medical SSMID Commission. Efforts centered on maintenance and beautification, stronger communication with property owners, businesses, and stakeholders, and expanded outreach to visitors.

During the first half of the year, the district refreshed and enhanced banners, installed roadway planters, and worked with property owners to improve the appearance of their properties. MedQuarter also advanced coordination around summer construction season improvements, including planned traffic-flow changes on 12th and 13th Streets and Coe Road to improve access to UnityPoint – St. Luke's Hospital, Coe College, and I-380.

