2017 Community Conversations Report: Statewide Synthesis

In late 2016 and early 2017, University of Missouri Extension gathered input from Missouri stakeholders on key challenges facing their communities. Facilitated Community Conversations employed the World Café process. These were held across the state—26 with approximately 600 external Missouri stakeholders, 8 with approximately 500 Extension regional faculty and staff, and 4 with approximately 100 university faculty and staff from MU and Lincoln University. External stakeholders included representatives from: Extension councils; local, regional, and state government; business and industry; education; faith-based, social service, civic and community non-profit organizations; family- and youth-serving organizations; farm, agriculture, natural resources and environmental organizations; and key population groups. Four of the external conversations were conducted in Spanish to engage Latinos from key population areas of the state.

From the reports submitted outlining the results of each conversation, a list of 158 unique issues was compiled. This list was then coded for themes using qualitative methods, and the issues were organized under the resulting themes and subthemes. Definitions for each category were developed from the words participants used to define the issues in their communities. In the report below, issues, as written by participants, are listed beneath appropriate themes and subthemes. Themes are organized alphabetically. Subthemes are listed beneath their respective themes in descending order by frequency, on the basis of external Missouri stakeholder Community Conversations frequencies within a particular theme. Note that many issues fall in more than one category.

Economy: Workforce Development, Community Impacts, Poverty

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Workforce Development
Definition: Broad, inclusive grouping of economy-focused needs primarily at the individual employee level. The need for workforce development is expressed through participants' requests for formal trade skill education, nonformal vocational education programs, and the creation of desirable jobs paying living wages.</td></tr>
<tr><td>External (19 of 26 conversations, 73%)
Job development & training (Columbia)
Workforce development (Hamilton)
Workforce development and livable wage (Hannibal)
Skilled workforce (Hillsboro)</td><td>Regional Faculty/Staff (4 of 8 conversations, 50%)
Workforce development (Southwest)
Vocational education in schools (Southwest)
Youth focused economic development – youth engagement,</td><td>Campus (3 of 4 conversations, 75%)
Strengthening the local economy, including agriculture (Lincoln)
Viable economic development (MU – February 1)
Educating citizens to contribute to the workforce (MU – February 1)</td></tr>
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• Workforce: lack of qualified applicants (Independence) • Soft skills and work ethic education (Jackson)* • Economic development: Jobs, wages, entrepreneurship (Jefferson City) • Workforce – vocational training (Kirksville)* • Education/qualified workforce (Lebanon) • Economic development – business (Nevada) • Quality jobs and educated workforce (Nevada) • Lack of quality jobs and workforce issues (Ozark) • Job creation and workforce development in rural communities (Poplar Bluff) • Workforce readiness and employment (Portageville) • Small business support/job training (Steelville) • Motivated workforce (West Plains) • Education/training/job skills (St. Louis) • Economic development – creating and retaining quality jobs (Warrensburg) • Gainful employment (Warrensburg) • Living wage jobs (St. Peters) • Economic stability and job growth (Kansas City – Platte County)	youth retention, youth employment, youth entrepreneurship (Southwest) • Economic Development—Jobs, Entrepreneurship, Job Training (Urban West) • Vocational Training (Southeast) • How to make people (youth) more employable (Northeast) • Employment & entrepreneurship; workforce development (Northeast) • Retaining Employees by working with employers on wellness and advancement (Southeast)	

Community Impacts Definition: *The effect of economic decline on individuals and communities. This may take the form of job loss or lack of employment opportunities, decreased community vitality, or difficulty retaining/attracting youth.*		
External *(5 of 26 conversations, 19%)* • Economic stability and job growth (Kansas City – Platte County) • Decline in rural population (Kirksville) • Job creation and workforce development in rural communities (Poplar Bluff)* • Regionalism – community strategic planning and implementation (St. Louis) • Attracting industry (Ste. Genevieve)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(4 of 8 conversations, 50%)* • Local commerce (East Central) • Sustainable Rural Communities (Northwest) • Rural job growth (Southwest) • Economic Development Impacts on Community (Southeast)	**Campus** *(1 of 4 conversations, 25%)* • Rural Prosperity (MU – February 7)

Poverty Definition: *The combined issues contributing to or resulting from poverty in a community.*		
External *(3 of 26 conversations, 12%)* • Poverty (Ozark) • Poverty, affordable housing, and food security (Neosho)* • Food insecurity (Hillsboro)*	**Regional Extension Faculty/Staff** *(3 of 8 conversations, 38%)* • Generational poverty (Southwest) • Generational poverty (West Central) • Childhood poverty (East Central)	**Campus** *(1 of 4 conversations, 25%)* • Aging populations with poverty issues (MU – February 6)

Education: Life Skills, Vocational, Access and Quality, Information Access for Non-Native Speakers

Life Skills Definition: *The absence of both skills and programs to develop skills needed to successfully function in society. These "soft skills" are not actively taught in formal education. Examples of life skills include communication skills, manners, money management, and parenting skills.*		
External *(8 of 26 conversations, 31%)* • Life skill education (Hamilton) • Education – life skills (Independence) • Soft skills and work ethic education (Jackson)* • Family/parenting life skills (Jackson)* • Personal finance (Jackson) • Education – tech/soft skills (Mexico) • Financial responsibility (Mexico) • Youth life skills (Mexico) • Vocational/life skills training (Neosho) • Basic life skills education (Ozark) • Life skills education (Ste. Genevieve) • Life skills (Warrensburg)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(3 of 8 conversations, 38%)* • Life Skills/Lack of Managing Resources, Communication, Cooking Skills (Southeast) • Life Skills—Functioning as Adults, Time Management, Home Economics (Urban West) • Personal finance management (West Central)	**Campus** *(2 of 4 conversations, 50%)* • Youth development and drug prevention (Lincoln) • Educating citizens to contribute to the workforce (MU – February 1)

Vocational Definition: *Lack of career and technical education opportunities that prepare youth for professional trades. Though connected to "workforce development," this category focuses more specifically on formal education.*		
External *(7 of 26 conversations, 27%)* • Agriculture training in school curriculum (Hillsboro)* • Workforce – vocational training (Kirksville)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(3 of 8 conversations, 38%)* • Vocational education in schools (Southwest) • Vocational education opportunities (West Central)	**Campus**

• Education/qualified workforce (Lebanon)* • Education – tech/soft skills (Mexico)* • Vocational/life skills training (Neosho)* • Education/training/job skills (St. Louis)* • Trade skills/vocational education (Ste. Genevieve)	• Vocational Training (Southeast)	

Access and Quality Definition: *The expressed need for well-funded, high-quality Pre-K through college education and nonformal education. This education should be available to all students regardless of location (rural/urban) or income.*		
External *(7 of 26 conversations, 27%)* • Funding for education pre-k through higher education (Independence) • Lifelong STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) education (Kansas City – Platte County) • Education, cost and access (Neosho) • Education/training/job skills (St. Louis)* • Quality Pre-K (St. Louis) • Motivation/desire/exposure to education (West Plains) • Education (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 1) • Language Education (Kansas City – Spanish speaking)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(4 of 8 conversations, 50%)* • Quality Education (Urban West) • Education equality (Urban East) • Education (East Central) • Lack of knowledge of extension (West Central) • Funding for Extension programming (Urban West)	**Campus** *(3 of 4 conversations, 75%)* • Strengthening education and research (Lincoln) • Education at All Levels (MU – February 7) • Comprehensive educational opportunities (MU – February 6) • State Revenue Shortage - Education budget cuts (MU – February 7)

• Education and technology/computers (Kansas City – Spanish speaking)* • Communication, marketing, and access to Extension programs/services (West Plains) • MU Leadership – Connections between campus and communities (West Plains)*		

Information Access for Non-Native English Speakers
Definition: *The lack of participant knowledge of resources, programs, and information already available to meet needs and address concerns. This issue emerged as a priority exclusively in the Spanish speaking conversations.*
External Spanish Speaking • Lack of information in Latino communities about programs/resources (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 2) • Lack of information and capital (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 1) • How to share information (Kansas City – Spanish speaking) • Information center (Branson – Spanish speaking)

Food and Natural Resource Systems: Food Access and Security, Agriculture, Conservation

Food Access and Security Definition: *The lack of availability of healthy, affordable food.*		
External *(7 of 26 conversations, 27%)* • Food insecurity (Hillsboro)* • Access to wholesome foods (Independence) • Food (Mexico) • Healthy food access (Ozark) • Food quality and access (Portageville) • Poverty, affordable housing, and food security (Neosho)* • Community health and nutrition (Kansas City – Platte County)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(2 of 8 conversations, 25%)* • Childhood Nutrition/Weekend hunger/ Adding weekend activities/Need youth community centers (Northeast)* • Food Desert/Access to healthy food (Urban East)	**Campus**

Agriculture Definition: *Issues regarding the changing landscape of agriculture in an area. This category includes concerns with economic viability of the agriculture industry, the rising age of farmers, and consumer demands.*		
External *(4 of 26 conversations, 15%)* • Cattle/agriculture industry (West Plains) • Agriculture issues (Warrensburg) • Agriculture training and literacy (Neosho) • Agriculture training in school curriculum (Hillsboro)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(4 of 8 conversations, 50%)* • Continuing change in ag economy – generational change; shift from traditional commodity to new systems; economic issues (Northeast) • Farm financial crisis (West Central) • Agriculture Policy Issues (Northwest) • Farming/Ag Profitability and how the impact on community systems (Southeast)	**Campus** *(3 of 4 conversations, 75%)* • Strengthening the local economy, including agriculture (Lincoln) • Support for Agriculture (MU – February 7) • Promoting innovation to support development, esp. Agriculture (MU – February 1)

Conservation Definition: *Challenges to preserving, protecting, or restoring natural resources.*		
External *(2 of 26 conversations, 8%)* • Natural resource stewardship (Steelville) • Preservation of air, water, and land (Poplar Bluff)	**Regional Extension Faculty/Staff**	**Campus** *(1 of 4 conversations, 25%)* • Environmental sustainability (MU – February 1)

Health: Care Affordability and Access, Substance Abuse, Mental Health

Care Affordability and Access Definition: *The lack of available and/or affordable high-quality medical care regardless of location (rural/urban) or income. The issue may be expressed at the community, public health level, or more specifically focus on a lack of providers in an area or the prohibitive price of receiving care.*		
External *(7 of 26 conversations, 27%)* • Medical care (Branson – Spanish speaking) • Access to affordable health care throughout life (Columbia) • Affordable, comprehensive health care (Nevada) • Access to health care (St. Louis) • Affordable healthcare (Warrensburg) • Right to medical healthcare (Kansas City – Spanish speaking) • Healthcare affordability and access (Independence)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(6 of 8 conversations, 75%)* • Access to affordable healthcare (West Central) • Affordable health care (East Central) • Preventive Health/Wellness (Urban West) • Health Care Affordability and Access (Northwest) • Affordable Healthcare: Access, location, affordability (Southeast) • Affordable Health Care as it relates to jobs (Northeast) • Access to health care including mental health (Northeast)	**Campus** *(3 of 4 conversations, 75%)* • Affordable healthcare (Lincoln) • Public Health (MU – February 7) • Healthcare access and education (MU – February 6)

Substance Abuse Definition: *Issues related to drug use and addiction.*		
External *(3 of 26 conversations, 12%)* • Drug epidemic (Portageville) • Drug problems – social issue (Lebanon) • Mental health and substance abuse (Independence)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(2 of 8 conversations, 25%)* • Substance abuse (East Central) • Violence – Drug Addiction (Urban East)	**Campus** *(1 of 4 conversations, 25%)* • Youth development and drug prevention (Lincoln)

Mental Health Definition: *Lack of availability of mental health care providers, or issues surrounding the social and emotional wellbeing of community members.*		
External *(2 of 26 conversations, 8%)* • Mental health and substance abuse (Independence)* • Mental health care (Hannibal)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(4 of 8 conversations, 50%)* • Mental Health (East Central) • Strategies for Mental Health Youth and Adults (Southeast) • Mental Health (Urban East) • Access to health care including mental health (Northeast)	**Campus**

Infrastructure: Internet and Computer Access, Utilities, Transportation

Internet and Computer Access Definition: *The lack of high-speed Internet availability in rural areas, primarily. Also may refer to a "digital divide" in computer availability by income.*		
External *(7 of 26 conversations, 27%)* • Access to broadband (Jefferson City) • Infrastructure: road, rail, internet (Nevada)* • High speed internet/broadband (Portageville) • Access to high-speed internet (St. Peters) • High speed internet (Steelville) • Internet infrastructure (Warrensburg) • Education and technology/computers (Kansas City – Spanish speaking)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(4 of 8 conversations, 50%)* • Internet access (West Central) • Limited Internet access availability in rural areas. (Southeast) • Poverty – digital divide access to computers (Urban East) • Access to broadband – for education, business, etc. (Northeast)	**Campus**

Utilities Definition: *Issues pertaining to the fundamental physical structures and systems (other than Internet or transportation) that serve a community or municipality. These issues may be either a lack of necessary structures or systems, a lag in their development, or a lack of modernization*.		
External *(6 of 26 conversations, 23%)* • Utility infrastructure (Hamilton) • Infrastructure (Hannibal) • Water and sewer infrastructure (Hillsboro) • Rural infrastructure (Kirksville) • Infrastructure development (Lebanon)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(2 of 8 conversations, 25%)* • Childhood Nutrition/Weekend hunger/ Adding weekend activities/Need youth community centers (Northeast) • Infrastructure – bridges/roads; lack of community centers (Northeast) • Lack of infrastructure (East Central)	**Campus** *(1 of 4 conversations, 25%)* • Technology infrastructure (MU – February 6)

• Water and sewer infrastructure (Poplar Bluff)	• Elderly services – transportation, $ for medications, food services, home assistance, access to elder housing needed. (Northeast)	

Transportation Definition: *Issues pertaining to transportation structures and systems, including roads, trains, and public transportation systems.*		
External *(6 of 26 conversations, 23%)* • Public transportation (Branson – Spanish speaking) • Transportation infrastructure (Columbia) • Transportation and infrastructure (Independence) • Transportation and infrastructure (Jefferson City) • Access to public transportation (St. Peters) • Infrastructure: road, rail, internet (Nevada)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff**	**Campus**

Youth and Families: Families, Youth Retention

Families Definition: *Issues related to changes in family structure or a lack of parenting skills.*		
External *(4 of 26 conversations, 15%)* • Family/parenting life skills (Jackson)* • Family wellness (Steelville) • Lack of family structure (Hamilton) • Lack of state paid licensed childcare facilities (Poplar Bluff)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(2 of 8 conversations, 25%)* • Family Strengths (Southeast) • Family breakdown (Urban East)	**Campus**

Youth Retention Definition: *Social and economic challenges to keeping youth in the community.*		
External *(1 of 26 conversations, 4%)* • Retention of youth (Kirksville) • Youth community involvement/retention (Kirksville)* • Decline in rural population (Kirksville)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(3 of 8 conversations, 38%)* • Youth focused economic development – youth engagement, youth retention, youth employment, youth entrepreneurship (Southwest) • Childhood Nutrition/Weekend hunger/ Adding weekend activities/Need youth community centers (Northeast) • Youth leaving the region because of employment opportunities (Northeast) • Engaging youth in local communities (West Central)	**Campus**

Issues without overarching theme: Community Engagement; House; Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Community Engagement
Definition: Challenges in building inclusive networks of individual community members, lack of knowledge of community resources, lack of leadership or volunteerism, lack of civic involvement.</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>External (8 of 26 conversations, 31%)
Community engagement and awareness (Ozark)
Access to community resources and services (Ozark)
Decline in rural population (Kirksville)*
Youth community involvement/retention (Kirksville)*
Community engagement/investment (Kansas City – Platte County)
Information center (Branson – Spanish speaking)*
Formation/training of Latino leaders, civic participation (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 2)
Social integration and communication between Latino organizations (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 1)
Latino leadership and public participation (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 1)
MU Leadership – Connections between campus and communities (West Plains)*
Neighborhood and community policing (St. Louis)</td>
<td>Regional Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>Campus (3 of 4 conversations, 75%)
Strengthening communities/diversity (Lincoln)
Breakdown in community (MU – February 6)
Civility/communities working together (MU – February 1)</td>
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Housing Definition: *The lack of availability of safe, affordable, quality housing to rent or own.*		
External *(5 of 26 conversations, 19%)* • Affordable housing (Lebanon) • Affordable housing (Ste. Genevieve) • Affordable and accessible housing (Hillsboro) • Safe, affordable, decent housing (Hannibal) • Poverty, affordable housing, and food security (Neosho)*	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(1 of 8 conversations, 13%)* • Access to elder housing (Northeast)	**Campus**

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture Definition: *Issues pertaining to diversity and inclusivity of minority groups, as well as the availability of services to meet their needs. In the Spanish speaking conversations, this was directly connected to the current political environment and discourse.*		
External *(4 of 26 conversations, 15%)* • Race relations/cultural competency (St. Louis) • Need bilingual professional services/therapists (Branson – Spanish speaking) • Social/language integration (Branson – Spanish speaking) • Fear about the future, uncertainty about effects of federal changes (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 2) • Discrimination by origin/nationality/language/documents (St. Louis – Spanish speaking 2) • Language Education (Kansas City – Spanish speaking)	**Regional Faculty/Staff** *(1 of 8 conversations, 13%)* • Race Relations (Urban West) • Cultural Competency (Urban West)	**Campus** *(3 of 4 conversations, 75%)* • Strengthening communities/diversity (Lincoln) • Cultural inclusivity and awareness (MU – February 6) • Demographic change in Missouri (MU – February 1)