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:** 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.
  - Job development, job training, employee motivation and retention, and living wage jobs: 19 external (73%), 4 regional (50%), 3 campus (75%)
- **Community Impacts:** 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.
  - Rural job decline, attracting industry, economic stability and job growth: 5 external (19%), 4 regional (50%), 1 campus (25%)
- **Poverty:** The combined issues contributing to or resulting from poverty in a community.
  - Poverty, food insecurity, and generational poverty: 3 external (12%), 3 regional (38%), 1 campus (25%)

**Education:**

- **Life Skills:** 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.
- Soft skill and work ethic education, youth life skills, personal finance, and parenting skills: 8 external (31%), 3 regional (38%), 2 campus (50%)

- **Vocational:** 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.
  - Agriculture training in schools, vocational training, and trade skills: 7 external (27%), 3 regional (38%), 0 campus conversations

- **Access and Quality:** 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.
  - Funding for education, STEM education, quality Pre-K, and equal access to education: 7 external (27%), 4 regional (50%), 3 campus (75%)

- **Information Access for Non-Native English Speakers:** 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 all four Spanish-speaking conversations.

**Food and Natural Resource Systems:**

- **Food Access and Security:** The lack of availability of healthy, affordable food.
  - Access to healthy food, food security and affordability, child nutrition and hunger: 7 external (27%), 2 regional (25%), 0 campus conversations

- **Agriculture:** 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.
  - Agriculture training and literacy, agricultural industry, generational transitions, new non-traditional farming systems, financial crisis, supporting innovation, impact on community: 4 external (15%), 4 regional (50%), 3 campus (75%)

- **Conservation:** Challenges to preserving, protecting, or restoring natural resources.
  - Natural resource stewardship, environmental sustainability: 2 external (8%), 0 regional, 1 campus (25%)

**Health:**

- **Care Affordability and Access:** 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.
  - Access to affordable medical care, health education, and public health: 7 external (27%), 6 regional (75%), 3 campus (75%)

- **Substance Abuse:** Issues related to drug use and addiction.
  - Drug epidemic, youth drug prevention, and substance abuse: 3 external (12%), 2 regional (25%), 1 campus (25%)

- **Mental Health:** Lack of availability of mental health care providers, or issues surrounding the social and emotional wellbeing of community members.
  - Mental health care, youth mental health: 2 external (8%), 4 regional (50%), 0 campus
**Infrastructure:**

- **Internet and Computer Access:** The lack of high-speed Internet availability in rural areas, primarily. Also may refer to a “digital divide” in computer availability by income.
  - Access to broadband, educational technology, and digital divide in access to computers: 7 external (27%), 4 regional (50%), 0 campus conversations
- **Utilities:** 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.
  - Water and sewer infrastructure, rural infrastructure, technology, and elderly services: 6 external (23%), 2 regional (25%), 1 campus (25%)
- **Transportation:** Issues pertaining to transportation structures and systems, including roads, trains, and public transportation systems.
  - Public transportation, roads and rails, and transportation infrastructure: 6 external (23%), 0 regional, 0 campus conversations

**Youth and Families:**

- **Families:** Issues related to changes in family structure or a lack of parenting skills.
  - Parenting life skills, childcare availability, and family wellness: 4 external (15%), 2 regional (25%), 0 campus conversations
- **Youth Retention:** Social and economic challenges to keeping youth in the community.
  - Decline in rural population, youth community involvement, and youth development activities: 1 external (4%), 3 regional (38%), 0 campus conversations

**Issues without overarching theme:**

- **Community Engagement:** Challenges in building inclusive networks of individual community members, lack of knowledge of community resources, lack of leadership or volunteerism, lack of civic involvement.
  - Access to community resources, social integration, community policing, and civic engagement: 8 external (31%), 0 regional, 3 campus (75%)
- **Housing:** The lack of availability of safe, affordable, quality housing to rent or own.
  - Affordable housing, safe and decent housing, elder housing: 5 external (19%), 1 regional (13%), 0 campus conversations
- **Race, Ethnicity, and Culture:** 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.
  - Race relations, discrimination, cultural sensitivity and awareness: 4 external (15%), 1 regional (13%), 3 campus (75%)