ILLINOIS VALLEY

WINE TRAIL

Advisory Council

MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 PM

PEOPLE ◆ PARTNERSHIPS ◆ A STRONGER TOMORROW

Why We're Here

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGTHER TO STRENGTHEN
THE ILLINOIS VALLEY THROUGH COLLABORATION.
IDEAS AND ACTION.



CONNECT

Bring together diverse perspectives and stregthen partnerships.



EXPLORE

Share ideas, identify opportunities and address challenges.



BUILD

Support a vibrant sustainable future for the Illinois Valley.

The Council's Role

A SPACE FOR PERSPECTIVE, COLLABORATION & GUIDANCE

WE ARE HERE TO

- Bring diverse perspectives to the table.
- Identify opportunities, gaps and challenges.
- Strengthen connections across the visitor economy.
- Offer insight as IVWT tests and develops its tourism model.
- Help shape priorities through discussion and shared experience.

THE COUNCIL DOES NOT

- Manage day-to-day IVWT operations.
- Hold financial or contractual authority.
- Direct personnel or organizational decisions.
- Serve as a formal governing board.

ADVISE ◆ CONNECT ◆ INFORM ◆ COLLABORATE

Discussion and consensus guide our work. Operational responsibility remains with IVWT leadership.

The Experiment: 2026 – 2028

A THREE-YEAR INCUBATION FOR A STRONGER TOMORROW

2026
BUILD & PROVE

- Establish the Wine Trail brand and core programs
- Test events, partnerships and visitor engagement
- Build awareness and community support
- Lay the foundation for what's next

2027
COORDINATE & MEASURE

- Expand and refine programs
- Strengthen regional partnerships and collaboration
- Track participation, visitor data and economic impact
- Identify infrastructure needs and opportunities
- Evaluate organizational structure options

2028
INSTITUTIONALIZE

- Assess results and community impact
- Determine the long-term structure and role of IVWT
- Explore whether a broader Illinois Valley Tourism Alliance is needed
- Position the Illinois Valley for continued, sustainable destination growth

Today's work. A stronger tomorrow.

ILLINOIS VALLEY WINE TRAIL
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

What We've Built in 2026

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR LONG-TERM IMPACT



BRAND & IDENTITY

- Launched the Illinois Valley Wine Trail
- Established brand, logo and messaging
- Built website and social media presence
- Created marketing materials (signage, rack cards, banner)

Wine is the invitation. The Illinois Valley is the experience.



EVENTS & PROGRAMS

- Hosted Blackberry Nights (Aug 8)
  ~26 guests, 4 wineries, 6 vendors
- Music in the Vines (September weekends)
- Sip & Wag Weekends (September 19–20 & 26–27)
- Launched Passport Pours (monthly, 2nd Sundays)
  First meeting Sept 13 at Foris
  7 attendees
- Planning Savor the Season Wine Tours (Nov 7 & 14)



PARTNERSHIPS

- Working with 4 wineries
  - Augustino Estate & Winery
  - Bridgeview Vineyards
  - Deer Creek Vineyards
  - Foris Vineyards
- Signed first tourism partner
- Four additional businesses showing interest
- Outreach to regional partners (e.g., Travel Southern Oregon, Oregon Wine Board)
- Building relationships with local businesses and organizations



MARKETING & OUTREACH

- Website live
- Social media and email marketing
- Printed materials (passports, rack cards, signage)
- Media outreach and community promotion
- Storytelling through photos, videos and blog content



LEARNING & GROWTH

- Benchmark research with other wine trails and rural communities
- Learning from DMOs and industry experts
- Gathering feedback from visitors, wineries and partners
- Identifying opportunities, challenges and next steps

A stronger tomorrow. Together.

Then the Research Changed the Question

FROM A WINE TRAIL QUESTION TO A REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY

THE ORIGINAL QUESTION

"How do you build a successful small wine trail?"

I set out to learn from other wine trails — especially those with 3–8 wineries — about structure, funding, events and best practices.

WHAT I FOUND

- Every trail is different — there is no single model.
- Successful trails are usually part of a larger tourism ecosystem.
- Many started small and evolved over time.
- Most rely on strong partnerships with chambers, DMOs and community organizations.
- The most successful trails focus on the entire visitor experience — not just wineries.

THE BIGGER QUESTION

"What's the best way to grow a stronger, more vibrant visitor economy for the Illinois Valley?"

The research didn't just inform the wine trail — it opened up a larger conversation about how we work together to support tourism, businesses and the entire community.



What Other Wine Trails Taught Us

DIFFERENT MODELS. COMMON THEMES. VALUABLE INSIGHTS.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- Nonprofit, 501(c)(6) and Chamber models
- No single right model — success depends on local goals and resources
- Clear governance and defined roles are essential
- Many use professional management or contracted support

EVENTS & PROGRAMMING

- Wine trails typically host 2–6 major events per year
- Wineries often supply their own wine and food for tours/events
- Ticket revenue models vary (kept by trail, shared, or direct to wineries)
- Events drive visibility, media attention and repeat visitation

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

- Successful trails work closely with Chambers, DMOs and local businesses
- Lodging, dining, recreation and retail partners expand economic impact
- Tourism thrives when organizations work together, not in silos
- Shared marketing efforts create greater reach and a stronger destination.

MARKETING & VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

- Strong, consistent branding and storytelling
- Passports, themed tours and seasonal events are effective tools
- Email marketing and social media are key to staying connected
- Professional photography and quality content make a difference

ECONOMIC IMPACT & GROWTH

- Wine trails can be a catalyst for broader tourism development
- Visitors spend beyond wine — on lodging, food, shopping, experiences and gasoline
- Trails help build community pride and a stronger local economy
- Success is measured by long-term impact, not just ticket sales

"The most successful wine trails don't just promote wineries — they help tell the story of a place."

STRONGER TOGETHER.



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What Comparable Rural Communities Taught Us

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES. PRACTICAL IDEAS. RELEVANT TAKEAWAYS.

TOWNS LIKE OURS

- Looked at small, rural valleys with populations ~5,000–25,000.
- Included communities that are new or growing their tourism efforts.
- Studied towns with similar geography — recreation, outdoor tourism and natural amenities.
- Focused on places with limited staff and modest budgets.

ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

- Tourism often led by the Chamber, a dedicated DMO, Main Street program or a collaboration.
- Some communities created a new tourism alliance or committee.
- Clear roles and communication between local organizations are important.
- Many start small, test ideas, then expand as support grows.

FUNDING & RESOURCES

- Common funding sources include transient lodging tax (TLT), memberships, grants and local support.
- Some use a portion of TLT specifically for destination marketing.
- Many leverage regional partnerships to stretch limited resources.
- Creative funding and phased growth are often necessary in rural areas.

STRATEGIES THAT WORK

- Lead with what makes the community unique (nature, small-town charm, local food and drink, arts and culture).
- Build partnerships across sectors.
- Create signature events and seasonal programming.
- Invest in storytelling, photography and consistent branding.
- Focus on the full visitor experience — not just one attraction.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THE ILLINOIS VALLEY

- Start where we are, with what we have.
- Collaboration multiplies impact.
- A long-term, coordinated effort builds a stronger visitor economy.
- Small communities can make a big impact with a clear plan, community support and consistent effort.
- The opportunity is bigger than wine — and it's within reach.

Small towns can do big things when they work together.



Illinois Valley Already Has Pieces of the Puzzle

EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS. COMPLEMENTARY ROLES. A STRONGER WHOLE.

WE'RE NOT STARTING FROM NOTHING

The Illinois Valley already has a strong foundation of organizations, resources and community partners working toward a more vibrant local economy.

The opportunity isn't to reinvent the wheel — it's to better connect the pieces, reduce duplication and work together toward shared goals.

Stronger. Together.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Business support, networking, advocacy, and community connection.

MAIN STREET CAVE JUNCTION
Downtown revitalization, events and small business support.

IVCDO
Community development, funding and project support.

ILLINOIS VALLEY WINE TRAIL
Wine tourism, events, partnerships and destination marketing.

A STRONGER *Illinois Valley*
VISITORS
BUSINESSES
RESIDENTS
COMMUNITY

VISIT GRANTS PASS
Regional tourism marketing and visitor resources.

ROGUE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and education resources.

TRAVEL SOUTHERN OREGON
Regional destination marketing and industry support

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

- Better coordination and communication
- Shared marketing and storytelling
- More combined events and experiences
- Stronger visitor pathways across the region
- Greater economic impact for the entire Valley

SAME ROOTS.
A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.



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What's Falling Between the Pieces?

IDENTIFYING GAPS. FINDING OPPORTUNITIES. WORKING SMARTER TOGETHER.

VISITOR INFORMATION

- Consistent, up-to-date information
- Clear wayfinding and signage
- Coordinated online and in-person resources

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

- Connecting attractions, wineries, businesses and downtowns
- Packaging experiences
- Extending visitor stays and spending

COORDINATION

- Sharing plans and avoiding duplication
- Aligning events and marketing
- Identifying who does what — and where support is needed

Where can we do more together?

IDEAS.
PERSPECTIVE.
PARTNERSHIP.

STORYTELLING & MARKETING

- A unified story for the Illinois Valley
- Showcasing the full range of experiences
- Reaching new audiences together

DATA & MEASUREMENT

- Tracking visitor impact
- Understanding what's working
- Using data to support funding, advocacy and future planning

What do you see?
Where are the biggest opportunities for collaboration?



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Highway 199 Visitor Guide

A WARM WELCOME. A CLEARER PATH. A STRONGER TOMORROW.

Same destination. New adventures.

Why It Matters

The Highway 199 closure impacts more than just wineries — it affects every business, attraction, and community along the corridor.

A visitor guide can help us keep travelers informed, showcase what's open, highlight detours and alternate routes, and turn a challenge into an opportunity to explore more of the Illinois Valley.

Detours lead to discoveries.

POTENTIAL CONTENT

DETOURS & ROUTE INFORMATION
Clear, up-to-date guidance for travelers

WHAT'S OPEN
Wineries, businesses, attractions, services

THINGS TO DO
Wineries, outdoor recreation, dining, shopping, events and more

EXPLORE MORE
Encourage longer stays and new experiences

EVENTS & SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS
What's happening in the Valley

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
Visitor centers, contact information, and helpful links

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. What information is most important to include?
2. Who should be involved in developing the guide?
3. Print, digital, or both?
4. How do we keep information current?
5. What resources or partnerships can support this effort?

YOUR IDEAS MATTER.



WINE IS THE INVITATION. THE ILLINOIS VALLEY IS THE EXPERIENCE.

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Next Steps & Opportunities

IDEAS TODAY. A STRONGER TOMORROW.

Small steps create big things in the Valley.

1

Highway 199 Visitor Guide

Develop a coordinated communication strategy to keep travelers informed and inspired. Target launch before January 2027.

2

2026 Fall & Winter Events

Continue to support upcoming events and collaborate on cross-promotion to bring visitors (and locals) into the Illinois Valley year-round.

3

Partnership & Resource Alignment

Identify opportunities to work together, leverage existing resources, and avoid duplication of efforts.

4

Marketing & Storytelling

Showcase the Illinois Valley's unique assets — wineries, outdoor recreation, small towns, arts, food, and more — through unified messaging.

5

Long-Term Growth

Lay the groundwork for future initiatives that strengthen tourism, support local businesses, and enhance quality of life in the Illinois Valley.



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Thank You for Being Part of the Conversation

IDEAS TODAY. A STRONGER TOMORROW.

Small steps create big things, in the Valley.

Today's Insights

Your ideas, perspectives and local knowledge help shape what's next for the Illinois Valley.

Next Steps

We'll incorporate today's input and move forward on identified opportunities.

Highway 199 Work Session

A dedicated planning session in early October to develop the project in more detail.

Next Meeting

JAN 2027

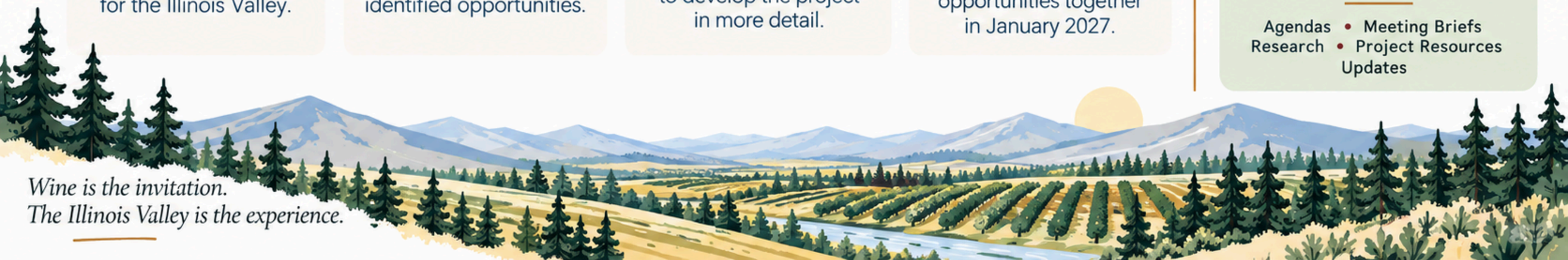
We'll check in on progress, share updates, and explore new opportunities together in January 2027.

ADVISORY COUNCIL RESOURCES

Scan to visit the Advisory Council page.

THEN CLICK
MEETING BRIEF & RESOURCES

Agendas • Meeting Briefs
Research • Project Resources
Updates



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The Illinois Valley is the experience.