

Business

Women's leadership organization TEMPO launches new St. Louis chapter

by Na'Porsha Williams | The St. Louis American

September 11, 2026



A new network of women leaders is taking shape in St. Louis, bringing together 40 women from some of the region's most prominent companies, universities and nonprofit organizations.

The group is the first chapter outside Wisconsin for TEMPO, a Milwaukee-based professional organization for women executives and emerging leaders.

For Shantia Coley, associate general counsel at Edward Jones, the appeal is the chance to build connections with women whose paths might not otherwise cross hers.

"I am definitely an advocate for advancing women's leadership. Period. Full stop there," Coley said.

She said TEMPO offers women in different industries an opportunity to connect around something they have in common: leadership.

TEMPO announced Tuesday that its 40 founding St. Louis members come from 31 organizations and work in financial services, technology, health care, higher education, law and nonprofits.

Other members are Gisele Marcus, vice dean at Washington University's Olin Business School; Stephanie Meyer, director of Workforce AI-Microsoft at World Wide Technology; Priyal Patel, chief financial officer at Bayer North America; and Sharon Fenoglio, chief advancement officer at Rung for Women.

The founding group also includes women from Commerce Bank, Husch Blackwell, Maryville University and U.S. Bank.

TEMPO was founded more than 50 years ago and has built a network of more than 500 executive women and nearly 300 emerging women leaders. It offers mentoring, networking and professional development.

One of the St. Louis chapter's first initiatives will be a research partnership with Olin Business School examining the experiences of women in the workplace.

Marcus, who also is faculty director of Olin's Women in Leadership Program, said the goal is to generate St. Louis-specific data that employers, educators, policymakers and community leaders can use to strengthen leadership pathways for women.

"Olin's partnership with TEMPO gives us an opportunity to ask a different question: What is happening to women right here in St. Louis?" Marcus said. "Once we understand that, we can move from anecdotes to evidence — and from evidence to action."

St. Louis was selected as TEMPO's first expansion market after the organization researched several cities and talked with business and community leaders here. TEMPO said those conversations pointed to an appetite for more connections among women working in different industries.

"St. Louis has an incredible community of accomplished women leaders, but what we heard repeatedly was a desire for more opportunities to connect across companies and industries in an authentic and meaningful way," TEMPO President and CEO Jennifer Dirks said.

The St. Louis chapter will develop its own programming, while local members also will have access to TEMPO's larger network. Some programs and events will bring together members from St. Louis and Milwaukee.

Coley said she also sees the chapter helping cultivate the region's next generation of women leaders.

"One of the huge components will be strengthening existing women leaders in St. Louis and inspiring the next generation of women leaders to come after us," she said.