



Strategic Plan 2015-2017

BACKGROUND: After concerted efforts to gain a better understanding of membership profiles, membership investment, organizational structure, and financial performance, the Chamber launched a strategic planning initiative which included the following:

- 1) The president held approximately 60 one-on-one meetings with community leaders and Chamber members;
- 2) The team analyzed current programs and benefits to determine how well they met the following criteria: relevance to mission, effective use of human resources, life cycle position, percentage of members who use it, availability elsewhere, financial performance, and whether we start it today;
- 3) The team surveyed members and board;
- 4) The team analyzed the survey and meeting data to develop common themes;
- 5) The board of directors and invited guests met for a day and a half to review the findings and suggest potential strategies; and
- 6) The team reviewed the strategies to determine which ones to incorporate into the Chamber's business plan.

The strategic plan is based on the organization's foundational principles:

VISION STATEMENT: To be the community leader in positive change, fostering prosperity, and building a stronger economic future. As the trusted voice for all Cabarrus County businesses, the chamber works collaboratively to address the region's current and future needs. (Adopted 12/18/14)

MISSION STATEMENT: To lead, serve, & promote our businesses and communities. (Adopted 12/18/14)

CORE VALUES: Integrity Inclusiveness Excellence Leadership

CONCERN AND FOCUS AREAS

Analysis of the survey and meeting data resulted in the following areas of concern for the members.

- Cash flow
- Customer service
- Local economic climate
- Sales
- Competition



Additionally, feedback indicated the Chamber should focus on

- Driving business to members
- Improving the economy
- Increasing the visibility of members
- Providing education and networking

The Chamber team and board generated ideas for each division which addressed these concerns and areas of focus. The team applied the following matrix to assist in determining which ideas qualified for consideration in the 2015-17 strategic plan and the 2015 business plan.

New Ideas / Initiatives	Concerns					Focus			
	Cash Flow	Customer Service	Local Economic Climate	Sales	Competition	Drive Business to Members	Improve Economy	Visibility of members	Education & Networking
Small biz advisory board w/ diverse representation of owners/mangers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Communicate to public policy makers and chamber			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bullet points with links			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Card stock marketing piece			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quarterly newsletter			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ambassador Training for PP			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Social and print media & B2B			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BRE outlets			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Training Programs			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Five Year Priority Project Statement			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fill EDC's BRE position*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Youth Entrepreneur initiative*			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community entrepreneur initiative*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Job fair*		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mentor / Protégé Program*			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Newcomers Guide*		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Be more welcoming to international community			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Effectively use social media to promote members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Develop a public campaign that promotes a team spirit in community			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Encourage growth of innovative startups - find place for them			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Find international residents/businesses to help with recruitment			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						



New Ideas / Initiatives	Concerns					Focus			
	Cash Flow	Customer Service	Local Economic Climate	Sales	Competition	Drive Business to Members	Improve Economy	Visibility of members	Education & Networking
Segment member outreach by interest			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Develop industrial council		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
Team Development						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Team Reward/Recognition						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Insure Events							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Personnel Manual									
Operations Manual									
Maintain 6 Months Reserves						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Track team time on events									
Broadcast/Share Financial Success							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Develop Innovation Fund	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Research Reconfiguration of Space for Sublet									
Diversify Revenue Streams (affinity programs)						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Redirect Organizational Structure							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Comp & Benefit Review									
Local Coupons (e-coupons)*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Local Deal (Save Local Now)*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Member-to-member discounts*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Profile members / industries*			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Celebrate business-related days*			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Size-up*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Certified Cabarrus Business*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Young Professionals Group*		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Re-focused Marketing*			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Category Consolidation*		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
Member MD/Rx*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Downloadable Chamber Badge*			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Nametag enhancements*		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Money dedicated to marketing pieces/plan			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Understand customers/gather intel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Dossier on each biz			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Know who to talk to in every biz			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Indiv conversations w/ biz			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ask what can the chamber can do for you that you cannot do for yourself			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ask members what their biz model is	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Explain chamber biz model			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Define and articulate benefits to members and public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
What makes renewing members feel valued?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		



New Ideas / Initiatives	Concerns					Focus			
	Cash Flow	Customer Service	Local Economic Climate	Sales	Competition	Drive Business to Members	Improve Economy	Visibility of members	Education & Networking
Small biz services/pool resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Concierge/ feature on website			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Engagement Training			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Serve young professionals/ partner w/ other orgs for young professional group		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
Prof development needs of members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
Junior (elem-high school) Chamber			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Member experience- training staff			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Educate value to members (don't nickle and dime)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Organization must represent itself and be bigger than one person			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Partner with SBC on Educational Programs*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DIVISIONS AND GOAL STATEMENTS

To accomplish the mission and move closer to the vision, the Chamber will focus activities on the following **GOALS** in the following **DIVISIONS**:

1. Advocacy

Goal Statement: To add value to the membership by influencing local, state and federal policy and regulation, and by effectively communicating the needs of the business community.

2. Community & Economic Development

Goal Statement: To attract, promote and support economic opportunities through partnerships that benefit the community and enhance the quality of life.

3. Finance & Administration

Goal Statement: To maintain fiscal responsibility while building the program and operational structure of the Chamber.

4. Membership

Goal Statement: To create and articulate value; to foster the expansion of commerce; and to retain & grow membership.



STRATEGIES

1. **Advocacy:** *To add value to the membership through influencing local, state and federal policy and regulation, and by effectively communicating the needs of the business community.*

It is important to maintain some of the strategies and activities which are currently a part of the advocacy role of the Chamber.

Existing Strategies

1. Develop an annual public policy agenda.
2. Track legislative / regulatory issues which affect business.
3. Educate members and the community on key issues (e.g. State of the Region Summits; Legislative Breakfast).

However the board and team felt that the addition of a new strategy, developed at the planning retreat, would have broad-reaching benefits for the Chamber and members.

New Strategies for 2015

1. *Develop a small business advisory board.* By engaging a cross-section of our small business members, we can determine their legislative and regulatory concerns, communicate our public policy positions, develop a grass roots network of small businesses, and create additional value for these members.
2. *Use BRE meetings to educate on Advocacy positions.* (Operational)
3. *Develop communications plan for Advocacy positions and grassroots network.* (Operational)
4. *Use Ambassadors to communicate Advocacy message.* (Operational)

New Strategy for 2016-17

1. *Develop a candidate training program.* Provide training to individuals interested in running for local or state office to educate them on the responsibilities of governmental bodies, how to run a campaign, and successful coalition building.

2. **Community & Economic Development:** *To attract, promote and support economic opportunities through partnerships that benefit the community and enhance the quality of life.*

It is important to maintain some of the strategies and activities which are currently a part of the community and economic development role of the Chamber.

Existing Strategies

1. Leadership development.
2. Provide programs / events which support and give back to the community (e.g. First Responders Appreciation, Teacher Appreciation).

Several new strategies create an opportunity for the Chamber to provide value to the members and community and partner with related organizations. The team felt



that the addition of the following new strategies, developed at the planning retreat, would have broad-reaching benefits for the Chamber and members. There were also some strategies developed at the planning session which are operational in nature and can be incorporated.

New Strategies for 2015

1. *Develop a community-based entrepreneur initiative.* Although there needs to be an assessment of what such an initiative would look like and how it would operate, there are some immediate actions to build a coalition of partners. Other benefits of this initiative should include a youth entrepreneur program and business mentoring.
2. *Develop an industrial council.* The benefits of the council are similar to the small business advisory board: determine legislative and regulatory concerns, communicate our public policy positions, develop a grassroots network of industrial businesses, and create additional value for these members. In addition, however, these larger businesses may have human and other resources that could help the Chamber and EDC implement their strategic plans.
3. *Fill the Business Retention and Expansion team position.* (Operational)
4. *Communicate with members by interest area.* (Operational)
5. *Promote members and growth through social media and other outlets.* (Operational)
6. *Leverage existing international businesses and residents to be more welcoming to new international companies.* (Operational)

New Strategies for 2016-17

1. *Develop a leadership program for educators.* Using Leadership Cabarrus as a model, create a summertime program for teachers and counselors with the goals of educating about Cabarrus County, using local businesses to translate academic contention into practical application, encouraging cross-disciplinary and cross-system lesson planning, and linking the business community more closely to the education system.
2. *Develop Leadership Cabarrus Youth.* Using Leadership Cabarrus flagship program as a model, the Chamber will partner with the school districts and private schools to develop a community education and leadership skills course.
3. *Develop Leadership Cabarrus Non-profit.* To help our local not-for-profit organizations thrive in the new economy, the Chamber will develop a program targeting non-profit executive and board members which focuses on the differences between profit and non-profit, fiduciary responsibility, fund development, marketing, and legal issues.

3. **Finance & Administration:** *To maintain fiscal responsibility while building the program and operational structure of the Chamber.*

It is important to maintain some of the strategies and activities which are currently a part of the finance and administration role of the Chamber.



Existing Strategies

1. *Develop individual budgets for each event and program area.*
2. *Track and measure membership engagement and growth.*

As the Chamber continues to grow and the economic environment continues to change, the Chamber needs to be on a solid foundation to anticipate changes and respond quickly. Several new strategies will strengthen operations and communication internally with the team so as to provide more direct benefit and value to members and the community.

New Strategies for 2015

1. *Develop an innovation fund.* What programs or project would the Chamber like to try if we had the resources? What marketing initiative might we implement to raise the visibility of our members? An innovation fund could provide the resources to experiment and try new programs or initiatives without risking investor dollars.
 2. *Modify organizational structure to align with strategic plan.* (Operational)
 3. *Develop / review personnel policy manual.* (Operational)
 4. *Develop / review operations manual.* (Operational)
 5. *Invest in team professional development* (Operational)
4. **Membership:** *To rebrand, to retain, grow and articulate value to a membership base which represents the development of commerce to the region's diverse economy.*

The Chamber currently has a number of successful membership programs and initiatives. It is important to maintain some of the strategies and activities while re-energizing the membership with new opportunities.

Existing Strategies

1. *Membership retention.* Use team and Ambassadors to retain existing membership.
2. *Membership recruitment.* Use profiling to target members in sectors and industries which align with the Chamber's mission.
3. *Small business programs.* Build on the successes of Cabarrus Connections and Business Dialogue to help more members.
4. *Events.* Maximize existing events to educate members, increase members' visibility, and provide networking opportunities. This will increase the value of Chamber membership.
5. *Marketing opportunities.* Increase members' visibility through eNewsletter, website, quality of life publication, social media and other outlets.
6. Provide programs / events which support and give back to the community (e.g. First Responders Appreciation, Teacher Appreciation).



Since small business is the heart of our economy and the core of our Chamber membership, the addition of small business focused programming is vital to create value and maintain relevance. Responding to the feedback from our members and community, the following strategies will strengthen our small businesses, increase membership value

New Strategies for 2015

1. *Develop small business education and training programs.* Understanding there are broad needs of our members (managing cash flow, improving customer service, increasing sales, increasing visibility, dealing with competition, managing a business effectively and efficiently), the Chamber must respond by developing a variety of educational programs to be delivered in a variety of ways.
2. *Develop a Young Professionals Network.* Given the average age in Cabarrus County is 36, the Chamber has access to a large pool of young professionals who own their own business or who work in member businesses. Engaging these young leaders strengthens and deepens the engagement of our members and increases the value of Chamber membership.
3. *Create / integrate mobile member deals and coupon app.* (Operational)
4. *Communicate features of Chamber membership as benefits to local businesses.* (Operational)

New Strategies for 2016-17

1. *Develop school-based links to Chamber.* Building on the successes of the entrepreneur initiative and young professionals network, set up school-based junior Chambers.

SUMMARY

A Strategic Plan should be a living, breathing document. The plan outlined for 2015-17 provides ample direction to respond to immediate needs of our members and community while allowing enough flexibility to redirect efforts and resources. As long as the Chamber implements initiatives which address member concerns (cash flow, customer service, local economic climate, sales, and competition) and focuses on driving business to members, improving the economy, increasing the visibility of members, and providing education and networking, then member satisfaction will increase along with membership value and relevance.