

*Simply stated, your chamber is business and professional people working together to make your community a better place for everyone to live, work and play.*

## WHAT IS YOUR CHAMBER?

Your chamber of commerce is a voluntary partnership of business and professional people working together to build a healthy economy and to improve the quality of life in your community.

As your chamber works to accomplish these goals, it wears many hats: economic developer and planner; tourist information center; business spokesperson; economic counselor and teacher; government relations specialists; human resources advisor; and public relations practitioner.

Simply stated, your chamber is business and professional people working together to make your community a better place for everyone to live and work.

## WHO ARE YOUR CHAMBER'S MEMBERS?

Chamber of commerce members are businesses, organizations and individuals concerned with the socio-economic climate of your community. They have joined together because they know they stand a better chance of getting things done when they speak as one voice.

## WHO LEADS YOUR CHAMBER?

Your chamber of commerce is run by its members. They elect a Board of Directors that determines policies and sets goals. A president\* presides over all Board meetings.

Your chamber's day-to-day operations are handled by a professional manager. This person is a paid employee. Some small communities have managers who are either volunteers or part-time employees.

Members often become involved in chamber activities by working on committees. These committees range from economic development, education and human resources to conventions, tourism, public affairs and government relations.

\*Title is chairman at some chambers.

## WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF YOUR CHAMBER?

As it works to improve your community's economy and quality of life, your chamber keeps these board objectives in mind:

- To help businesses prosper and grow;
- To increase job opportunities;
- To encourage an orderly expansion and development of all segments of the community;
- To contribute to the overall economic stability of the community;
- To encourage and promote the nation's private enterprise system of competitive marketing.

## WHAT ARE THE ACTIVITIES OF YOUR CHAMBER?

Chamber of commerce activities reflect community needs. They are undertaken by members and staff to make the area a better place in which to live.

Some of the most popular activities of chambers include:

- *Economic development:* creating jobs; providing services and information to members; promoting retail activities; recruiting new businesses and industries; attracting tourists and conventions.
- *Community development:* planning for growth; revitalizing the downtown retail area; promoting a modern transportation system; sponsoring cultural activities.
- *Human resources development:* conducting economic education and training programs; developing minority businesses; encouraging job training partnerships in businesses; helping to improve health and human services.
- *Public affairs/relations:* communicating business and civic issues to local, state and national governments; helping citizens understand the legislative process and the free enterprise system of marketing; developing consumer affairs programs; conducting economic studies and surveys.

Specific activities of chambers of commerce are usually listed and discussed in their official publications.

## HOW DOES A CHAMBER ACCOMPLISH THESE ACTIVITIES?

Chambers of commerce usually accomplish their activities by:

- having specific goals and objectives designed to meet the needs of the community;
- having an organizational structure-with bylaws, policies and procedures-for coordinating volunteers and programs of work;
- having involved and dedicated leaders that are well informed and are willing to use their time and talent to accomplish meaningful activities;
- having informed, interested and willing members to work on committees, to carry out programs of work and to provide necessary financing;
- having the financial resources to undertake programs of work and to provide administrative responsibilities;
- having skilled executive management dedicated to the chamber staff, to creative programming and to sound operations.



## WHAT PART DOES YOUR CHAMBER PLAY IN HISTORY

The modern chamber of commerce movement traces its origin to Marseilles, France, where an independent voluntary organization was formed in the early seventeenth century to represent the commercial interests of that Mediterranean seaport.

Nearly a century later, the British formed the second Chamber of Commerce at St. Helier on the Channel Island of Jersey as an independent voluntary business organization representing the interests of that small island town.

The first American Chamber of Commerce was established in 1770 in New York City. By 1870, chambers were operating in 40 major American cities. In 1992 approximately 5,000 local and state chambers were operating across the United States.

It was during the first half of the twentieth century that United States chambers of commerce dramatically increased in numbers, growing from 100 in 1901 to nearly 3,000 in 1950.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce was founded on April 22, 1912, at the suggestion of President William Howard Taft to develop a strong link between business and government.

By 1992, the U.S. Chamber's membership had grown to include more than 2,900 chambers; 64 American chambers of commerce Abroad; 1,100 trade and professional associations and 180,000 business members.

For over three centuries, business and professional people have joined together in chambers of commerce to shape the future of their communities and the world.



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Your  
Chamber  
of  
Commerce

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