

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 - 2018



The Cuyahoga Valley  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

*Bridging Our Communities*

# PURPOSE

In the face of increased competition and slow economic recovery, chambers of commerce are tasked with finding new and innovative ways to remain relevant. Networking was and remains critical to businesses but it is no longer the chief purpose of the chamber. Increasingly, chambers have evolved to incorporate many goals including:

- building communities to which residents, visitors, and investors are attracted;
- promoting businesses;
- striving to ensure future prosperity via a pro-business climate;
- representing the unified voice of the business community; and
- reducing transactional friction through well-functioning networks.

The initiative to create a strategic plan was led by board president, Lynette Slama and members of the Programming Committee of the Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce. Brainstorming began in 2014, with extensive discussion around the hiring of a full-time Executive Director. The Programming Committee felt it important to provide the full-time Executive Director with every possible tool to be successful—one of which was the creation of a detailed plan for the future.

# PURPOSE

At the end of 2014, the Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce Board of Trustees agreed to engage in a strategic planning process to align the Chamber's structure around clearly defined goals. The Programming Committee of the Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce has developed this Strategic Plan which serves to outline the new direction of the Chamber for the next three years.

This is a fluid document and may be subject to changes as necessary, but provides a framework to guide Chamber decisions and actions for the next three years: addressing the needs of businesses within the region, the growth of Chamber membership and programs, promoting the economic and community well-being of the six member communities it and the economic development of the Cuyahoga Valley Region.

The strategic plan strives to meet the high standards set by the Vision, Mission and Value statements. The plan is structured to provide background and context in four key areas:

1. Economic Development
2. Advocacy
3. Community Engagement
4. Education

# PURPOSE

Within these key focus areas, the implementation plan includes prioritization of initiatives, specific action items and key measurements that will be used to determine the success of implementation.

The preparation of this document was initiated by the Programming Committee at the direction of the Chamber Board of Trustees. The document has been adopted by the Chamber Board of Director and will serve as a guide for future organizational decision making.

The 2015-2018 Strategic Plan provides stakeholders with a clear picture of the Chamber's mission, vision, core values and the direction of the organization.

# THE CUYAHOGA VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce is one of the largest chambers in Northeast Ohio, representing six communities in the Cuyahoga Valley Region: Brooklyn Heights, Cuyahoga Heights, Independence, Seven Hills, Valley View and Walton Hills.

The members of the Chamber represent a diverse cross-section of the Cuyahoga Valley: entrepreneurs, small business, large corporations, manufacturing, villages, cities, education, retail, banking, hospitality services and many more. Members enjoy many benefits –programs and resources to help grow their companies as well as opportunities to enjoy group savings on healthcare insurance and workers compensation premiums.

The Chamber offers ample opportunities to build business-to-business relationships, champion business interests, and promote economic development in this area. Through our membership in the Northeast Ohio Area Chamber of Commerce (NOACC), our members can connect with more than 35,000 businesses throughout Northeast Ohio.

## VISION

The vision of the Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce, through efforts of advocacy, community engagement, economic development, and education is to maximize the competitiveness and the economic strength of the businesses and communities in and around the Cuyahoga Valley region.

## MISSION

The Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce's mission is to build and strengthen relationships among businesses and the communities in and around the Cuyahoga Valley region by:

Promoting economic development initiatives that cultivate a business climate that creates jobs, strengthens investment, and embraces technology to improve the economic prosperity of the region.

Serving, representing, and enhancing business growth and success in the Cuyahoga Valley region by providing opportunities for businesses to advocate, grow, learn, and network.

Utilizing our pool of emerging, talented and diverse leaders to drive regional commerce and collaboration to make the Cuyahoga Valley region a better place to live, learn, work and play.

## VALUES

The Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce:

- Provides Value to Members... focusing on educational programs and services that contribute to the success of the members and their businesses
- Strengthens Community Involvement... supports decision-making that encourages growth and fosters a high ranking quality of life for all residents of the region
- Promotes and Enhances... a vibrant, diverse and sustainable economy by growing and retaining our existing businesses and recruiting new industry to the region
- Supports and Promotes... public policies that improve the competitiveness of the region and the state.

# OBJECTIVES

## Advocacy

The Chamber is the unified voice of the business community and it recognizes the importance of a pro-business environment. The Chamber is committed to supporting and promoting initiatives and policies that are conducive to job growth and retention and the success of the Cuyahoga Valley Region.

The Chamber understands how the governmental/legislative processes can impact the business community. The Chamber will work with the business community to identify priority issues for the private sector. The Chamber will shape government policy by educating elected officials and community leaders on the importance of developing business friendly communities. The ultimate goal of these advocacy efforts is to advance and maximize the economic development potential for the Cuyahoga Valley region.

## Economic Development

The Chamber will take an active role in fostering investment in the Cuyahoga Valley Region through the achievement of the mission and vision statements as well as forming strong local, regional and state partnerships.

The Chamber will form and maintain strong partnerships with economic development representatives of each member community. The Chamber will seek opportunities to assist local economic development efforts by providing site selection data and statistics and participating in community briefing and tours.

# OBJECTIVES

## Education

Enhancing and expanding educational offerings is paramount to the success of both the Chamber and the business community in the Cuyahoga Valley Region. Cost effective and relevant trainings will encourage Chamber members to invest in themselves, their businesses and the region.

The Programming Committee will be the primary party responsible for partnering with local, regional, state and federal organizations such as the Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, Cuyahoga Community College, economic development departments, Greater Cleveland Partnership and other agencies to find relevant and effective training topics.

The Chamber will initiate a comprehensive survey of both member and non-member businesses. This survey will be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Chamber and to identify the needs of the business community. Based on the input derived from the survey, the Chamber will evaluate its program offerings and determine a path forward to remedy any gaps.

# OBJECTIVES

## Community Engagement

Building strong communities that are exceptional places to learn, live, play and work is the foundation of the Chamber. In order to attract new and retain existing businesses, the Chamber recognizes the importance of investing in strong communities.

In addition to its annual scholarship awards, the Chamber will look for opportunities to connect residential and business communities around issues of corporate social responsibility and offer opportunities for companies to get involved in giving back to their communities.

## Marketing

The Chamber maintains dual roles in marketing: to attract and retain members for itself and to provide marketing opportunities for its members. Increasing the variety of marketing opportunities available to members will help ensure the future viability of the Chamber.

The Chamber will research ways to actively market itself and members by improving the effectiveness of its communications with investors and members of the community. Developing a formal strategy with tiered advertising opportunities will be a top priority.

The Chamber will maintain a website and utilize social media including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to promote Chamber events and community functions that showcase the Cuyahoga Valley Region in a positive light.

# OBJECTIVES

## Executive Director

In order to achieve the objectives established in the Strategic Plan, it is critical for the Chamber to retain a full time Executive Director.

The Executive Director will be the chief paid executive officer of the Chamber. This position will be responsible for the general supervision and management of the office and business affairs of the organization and executing the mission, vision and value statements of the strategic plan as approved by the Board of Directors. The Executive Director is also responsible for drafting and adhering to the Board approved annual budget.

# PRIORITIZATION AND DELEGATION SCHEDULE

## 1. Restructuring of the Bylaws and Committees:

Clearly defined roles will help the Chamber achieve the priorities established in the Vision and Mission statements. For this reason it is crucial to clearly define the responsibilities of the executive board, committees and committee chairs.

The President, Executive Director and Bylaws Committee will meet to review the existing Chamber Bylaws to ensure that they align with the Vision and Mission Statements and allow for the flexibility to meet the standards established in the Strategic Plan.

In order for the Executive Director to be successful in their role, they must have strong committees. As part of the review of the Chamber's Bylaws, each committee will be closely examined to ensure that they are fulfilling their obligation and the proper structure is in place to ensure responsibility and accountability.

# PRIORITIZATION AND DELEGATION SCHEDULE

## 2. Survey Business Communities

Feedback is extremely valuable when determining the effectiveness of an organization and can help provide a path forward. The Chamber will initiate two surveys: one for members and the other for non-member. These surveys will be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Chamber and to identify the needs of the business community. The results of the surveys will be reflected in the yearly business plan.

## 3. Website and Social Media

Social media makes networking easier, providing additional tools for the Chamber to connect with its members.

In addition to the quarterly newsletter, website and the directory, the Chamber will maintain Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts. The Chamber will utilize these social media avenues to:

- Recognize members
- Prospect for new members
- Promote events of the Chamber, its members and the communities it serves
- Update members on issues as they happen
- Solicit member feedback
- Create a forum for members to educate, inform and assist each other
- Drive action

# **PRIORITIZATION AND DELEGATION SCHEDULE**

## **4. Reorganization and Introduction of New Events**

After restructuring the bylaws and committees and evaluating the survey results, the Programming Committee will meet to assess the current schedule of events.

## **5. Advertising/Sponsorship Plan**

The Chamber will strive to provide advertising/sponsorship opportunities to increase the member's recognition and visibility throughout the Cuyahoga Valley region.

In addition to the current marketing opportunities, the Executive Director will develop a tiered advertising/sponsorship plan. A possible incentive for top tier donors would be one on one time with guest speakers prior to the event.

# **PRIORITIZATION AND DELEGATION SCHEDULE**

## **6. Membership Campaign & Member Retention Strategy**

Members are the lifeblood of the Chamber; retaining and increasing membership will strengthen the organization and enable the expansion of services. The Chamber, with assistance from the communities it represents, will be proactive in renewing existing members and pursuing new members. Strategies may include:

- The implementation of uninvolved member plan
- New member drive/campaign
- Retention plan

## **7. Annual Assessment/Business Plan**

During the fall, the Strategic Planning Committee with the Executive Director will conduct a preliminary review of the year and will prepare the upcoming year's budget and business plan.

Every November, the Chamber Board will conduct a yearly assessment of the organization. This process should entail auditing and amending the Strategic Plan, as well as evaluating the progress of the Chamber against the established goals for the year.

# PRIORITIZATION AND DELEGATION SCHEDULE

## 8. Advocacy

The Chamber has worked with local governments, educational institutions, private industries and a host of other agencies and organizations. In order to provide added value to members, improve the business environment, and promote the Cuyahoga Valley Region as a premier community in which to live, work, and do business, the Chamber will assume a new role in advocacy.

## 9. Executive Director

The addition of a full time Executive Director to the Chamber is the driving force behind the Strategic Plan.

The full time Executive Director will work under the authority granted by the Board of Trustees to assist in defining priorities to build and develop relationships among the Chamber, its corporate members and business enterprises, to implement the Board's policies and procedures, and to ensure program and fiscal accountability.

The Executive Director must adhere to the standards established in the employee handbook and is responsible for all operational, administrative and legal aspects of the daily organizational management of the Chamber, which includes but is not limited to achieving budget targets, public relations and marketing, sound management of all fiscal resources, supervision of program staff and business operations in accordance with standard business practices.

# SUMMARY

The adoption and implementation of the Strategic Plan provides a framework to ensure the future viability of the Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce. This plan will allow the Chamber to remain a meaningful and relevant organization to its investors and the member communities.

Moving forward, this plan will help inform and guide the strategic allocation of Chamber resources so they are aligned with the priorities highlighted in the Mission, Vision and Value statements.