

Guide to Accreditation

**Line-by-line assistance in
understanding the
accreditation application**

This guidebook is intended to assist those chambers/boards of trade that are applying or considering application for accreditation.

The numbers within this guide follow the various sections that are contained within the accreditation checklist and are to be used as guidance and explanation for those points that will be verified by evaluators when chambers or boards of trade apply for accreditation.

For the purposes of accreditation and the checklist, chambers and boards of trade are asked to apply under one of the categories described herein.

Small Chambers

Population of service area: up to 25,000 people **and/or**

Number of chamber members: 0-100 members **and/or**

Total chamber revenues: up to \$100,000

Medium Chambers

Population of service area: 25,001 to 75,000 **and/or**

Number of chamber members: 101 to 500 **and/or**

Total chamber revenues: \$100,001-\$500,000

Large Chambers

Population of service area: greater than 75,001 **and/or**

Number of chamber members: greater than 500 **and/or**

Total chamber revenues: greater than \$500,000

Please note: your chamber would opt into one of these categories for accreditation purposes. Applications will be scrutinized for category suitability.

TEN EASY STEPS TO ACCREDITATION

Step One

All chambers must meet the *Core Definition of a Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade* outlined in this documentation prior to submitting their applications for the more detailed checklist that will lead to accreditation.

What follows is a set of high level fundamental principles or beliefs that organizations calling themselves chambers of commerce or boards of trade are expected to adhere to as they advance towards accreditation. These principles are basic to good governance and any business organization declaring itself a chamber of commerce should be able to provide documentation that reflects their adherence to these principles.

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade across Canada have a longstanding tradition of being the voice of business within their communities. First and foremost, these organizations represent members in their community. The chamber's existence is based upon the following common elements:

- competition in a free market;
- excellence in customer service and satisfaction;
- broad economic and social community prosperity;
- law and order;
- reasonable profit;
- private ownership;
- individual integrity and responsibility;
- efficient and effective government; and
- public policy framework that supports economic progress and fosters business success.

CORE DEFINITION OF
A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/
BOARD OF TRADE

1. Chamber of commerce documentation must clearly state the community (this can be geographic or otherwise) served by the said chamber of commerce.
2. Must be incorporated, either provincially or federally.
3. Must have a paid membership.
4. Must keep an up-to-date membership list/database.
5. Must have an established set of bylaws.
6. Must have a mission statement/vision statement/values statement.
7. Must have a clearly defined code of ethics within which the chamber of commerce operates, demonstrating that the chamber of commerce operates under the principles of competition in a free marketplace and in a fair and equitable manner.
8. Must demonstrate the existence of an official governance model that is well understood and practiced.
9. Must have bylaws that clearly outline the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the governing body.
10. Must have a board that holds regularly scheduled meetings, at a minimum quarterly.
11. Must hold an annual general meeting open to all members.
12. Must have a designated spokesperson.
13. Must have directors insurance.
14. Must have, at minimum, an annual review of financial statements conducted by a qualified professional, e.g. by a chartered accountant (CA) or certified general accountant (CGA).

15. Must have an annual, updated business plan for the organization.
16. Must be a member of the provincial/territorial or national chamber of commerce and, within two years, be a member of both.
17. Must produce an annual report or summary of activities, which includes a list of the governing body.
18. Must demonstrate that the chamber's work environment presents itself with a professional image to staff and the community.
19. Must demonstrate that the chamber adheres to pertinent privacy legislation and has a privacy officer in place to answer any questions relative to privacy issues.

Please note that the terms chamber of commerce and board of trade are used interchangeably and refer to similar bodies within communities across the country.

In this document we use the word “chamber” to represent both chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade are “*The Voice of Business*” within their communities.

Step Two

Chambers seeking accreditation must meet the requirements of three mandatory areas of operation that are key to a chamber of commerce or board of trade's operation: *membership programs/services*, *organization/administration*, and *policy and advocacy*. Without meeting the requirements for these three mandatory areas, a chamber cannot proceed towards accreditation.

Following verification of the above-noted 19 core principles, the chamber of commerce seeking accreditation can then select their accreditation option: **accreditation** (3 mandatory pillars) or **accreditation with distinction** (all 5 pillars).

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade are asked to complete the basic application form, which notes the areas in which they are seeking accreditation. These are the areas that the *Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada (CCAC)* will then adjudicate upon application.

Please Note

Chambers must apply for accreditation with a minimum of three out of five pillar areas. The three mandatory sections: membership programs/services, operations/administration and policy and advocacy will mean an accreditation. By completing the remaining two areas; *governance*; and *strategic planning*, a chamber can achieve accreditation with distinction status. The specifications for all five pillars are outlined in the *Accreditation Checklist* and are explained within this guide.

Step Three

Using the *Accreditation Checklist*, the chamber self assesses the operations of the chamber of commerce against the requirements set out in the applicable level and sections.

Step Four

The chamber of commerce applies by submitting a completed application form and the required documents to the CACC by the set deadline that occurs twice per year – once in the spring, once in the fall.

Step Five

The provincial/territorial representative will provide feedback on your application at this point as necessary.

Step Six

The *CCAC* will then grant accreditations to those chambers of commerce and boards of trade that have met the requirements of a minimum of three of the five pillars.

To reach accreditation, chambers will adhere to the core principles plus a minimum of three of the five pillars.

Step Seven

Those chambers and boards of trade that achieve all five pillars within the designated category will be denoted as having achieved *accreditation with distinction*.

Step Eight

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade will be notified immediately following the *CCAC* meeting regarding the status of their application. Chambers that receive accreditation will be recognized before their peers at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting in September each year.

Step Nine

Accredited chambers of commerce and boards of trade will be able to use the designation “*accredited chamber of commerce*” in their materials and will also be able to use the accreditation logo upon successful completion of the program.

Step Ten:

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade that receive accreditation will be subject to periodic updates of their designation. This could include verification or furthering of their status of accreditation. The update procedure is subject to an administration fee.

LINE BY LINE ASSISTANCE FOR THE ACCREDITATION CHECKLIST

1

MANDATORY

POLICY & ADVOCACY

- 1) Must survey members at least annually to identify the public policy issues of most concern to the membership. Include a copy of your most recent survey results which clearly indicates the survey date and the survey method, e.g. telephone, e-mail, paper.
- 2) Must have a clearly defined process for the development and approval of policy positions/resolutions and this process must be published. Include documentation on policy development process.
- 3) Must monitor local government to ensure awareness of emerging local issues. Describe what process chamber has in place for media monitoring of issues.
- 4) For small chambers a narrow policy focus is acceptable - e.g. a singular focus on tourism policy. For medium and large-sized chambers, policy focus must be more broadly based than one single sector. Identify what policy issues your chamber is currently working on.
- 5) Must be active in at least two levels of public policy: local/regional, (including school boards) provincial/territorial, federal. Identify issues by level of involvement.
- 6) Must have a “fast track” approval process for fast breaking policy issues that require immediate chamber response; the “fast track” approval must be subsequently confirmed by the board of directors. Include your policy on policy response.
- 7) Chamber board of directors must strike committees/task forces to review public policy issues and to develop recommendations for consideration by the board of directors. Describe the process for

policy committee appointment and include the coordinates of your current policy committee.

- 8) Must be able to demonstrate that policy development activities are undertaken in response to the needs and interests of the membership. Describe the method used by your chamber to identify policy issues and the member approval process.
- 9) Must circulate policy surveys prepared by the provincial chamber and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to the membership to allow their members to have input into policy development at the provincial and national chamber levels. Describe your method for circulation of provincial/territorial and national policy issues.

a) Policy Development

- 1) Must convene at least one forum annually which focuses on public policy; this could be an all candidates forum, a post budget forum or an economic forum. Include promotional items from your most recent policy event, i.e. how did you get your members to attend?
- 2) Must prepare written submissions or make presentations at hearings for at least one municipal, provincial/territorial or national consultation process annually. Include one of your most recent briefings.
- 3) Must generate, bi-annually, at least one original policy resolution for debate at the provincial or national chamber convention; this may be done in cooperation with another chamber of commerce. Include a copy of the most recent resolution that your chamber has submitted or been involved with for the provincial and/or national policy forum.
- 4) Must be able to demonstrate ongoing policy development activity at local/regional (including school boards), provincial/territorial and national levels, e.g. municipal affairs, provincial/territorial affairs and national affairs committees that meet regularly, have clear mandates and that produce recommendations for board of directors consideration/approval. Include your chamber’s policy committee meeting schedule and include the policy committee’s mandate. Also include a copy of your most recent board minutes that include policy/advocacy report/recommendations.

- 5) Must conduct electronic policy development activity, e.g. email polling, Web-based membership survey, and Web forum. Describe your method of electronic policy work – as outlined above.

b) Advocacy

- 1) Must maintain a list of all locally elected officials and their coordinates including mayor, councillors, school board trustees, MPP/MLA/MNA, MP. Include a list of contacts.
- 2) Must maintain a list of all local and area media outlets, business reporters and coordinates. Include list of media contacts and coordinates.
- 3) Must maintain a menu of advocacy tactics including: letters to decision makers, meetings with key decision makers, letter writing campaign, petition, media conference, community meeting, letter to the editor, op-ed article, radio phone-in show, stakeholder alliance etc. Describe the ways in which your chamber might approach an advocacy issue. Include an example of at least one of your recent efforts in this regard.
- 4) Must be able to demonstrate working relationships with locally elected officials and media representatives. Include any recent correspondence with either.
- 5) Must meet with mayor/reeve and key members of local council at least once per year. Include minutes of meeting, photo, news item from your newsletter etc. that describes this meeting.
- 6) Positions approved by the board of directors must be communicated to the appropriate political decision makers, the membership (newsletter, Web site) and the media (media release); documentation must be maintained to verify communication, e.g. meeting minutes or notes, letters. Include two pieces of recent communications with members regarding policy work.
- 7) Must communicate matters of public policy which are of key concern and of the highest priority to the chamber to the appropriate elected officials in writing. Include a recent example of this type of communication.
- 8) Must set targets for and monitor media mentions regarding their advocacy efforts. Include copies of recent media monitoring efforts e.g. newsclippings.

- 9) Must attend and actively participate in either the provincial/territorial or national chamber convention. Include proof of your participation, i.e. registration, voting card form, etc.

If not sending a delegate to the provincial or national convention, must assign proxy. Include a copy of your AGM voting assignment or your proxy form.

- 10) Must be able to demonstrate active engagement in advancing the business agenda during local/regional, provincial/territorial and federal election campaigns through, for example - candidates' forums, candidate questionnaires, letters to the editor, op ed articles. Describe what you do during these political events and include one piece that supports your description, e.g. newsletter, report card etc.
- 11) Must respond to "action calls" and "action alerts" from provincial/territorial and national chambers to undertake activities in support of provincial/territorial and/or national chamber's advocacy initiatives; in cases where the local chamber's policy is different from that of the provincial/territorial or national chamber, the response may be simply communication with the senior level chamber noting the difference. Describe your response method to action calls/alerts from the chambers mentioned.
- 12) Must meet with MPP/MLA/MNA and MP at least once per year to review issues of concern to the membership and there must be evidence of regular and ongoing communication. Include description of last meeting and resulting correspondence.
- 13) Must develop and implement an advocacy/communications plan for each position adopted by the board of directors; the advocacy/communications plan must set goals and the effectiveness of the plan and its implementation must be measured. Include your plan for policy work.

2

MANDATORY

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS/SERVICES

a) Member communications

- 1) Must have, at a minimum, quarterly communications with membership – could be a newsletter, mailings, e-mail updates. **Medium** and **large** chambers must have a regularly scheduled newsletter or other communication vehicle with members – could be electronic or hard copy. Include a copy of your two most recent member communication pieces.
- 2) Must have a *Year in Review*-type document. **Medium** and **large** chambers must be able to provide an *Annual Report* or *Year in Review* document – can be hard copy or electronic version. Include this document.
- 3) Must have a Web site that cites current chamber contact information and membership sales and services information. The Web sites of **medium** and **large** chambers must have event information and issues information, and the Web site should be separated into member/non-member sections. **Large** chambers must have a Web site that contains current information on the chamber's activities including lobbying efforts and policy issues, events information, membership benefits, programming, links to provincial/territorial and national chambers. Include a hard copy of the front page of your chamber's Web site.
- 4) Must be able to demonstrate existence of a membership listing if requested. **Medium** chambers must be able to demonstrate the existence of a detailed, up-to-date membership listing. **Large** chambers must produce a membership directory – can be hard copy, electronic version or other. Include a front page and a listing page from your directory (if electronic, include disk).

b) Events

- 1) Must stage member networking events, e.g. *Business after Five*. **Large** chambers must stage multiple networking events for members and potential members through the year. Include promotional piece from event – could be invitation, newsletter item, etc.
- 2) Must stage a business recognition event. **Medium** and **large** chambers must stage a business recognition event – could be an awards evening, a customer service recognition program – some type of event that builds the profile of businesses within the community. Include invitation to this event.
- 3) Must hold an annual meeting of members. Include meeting notification.
- 4) **Large** chambers must have someone on staff who is responsible for planning and staging member events. Include organizational chart which indicates where this responsibility lies within staff.
- 5) **Large** chambers must stage learning opportunity events for members; these could be business or economic keynote speaker events, professional development or business development. Include promotional materials used for these activities.

c) Membership Benefit Programs

- 1) Must be able to define the benefits of chamber membership to members and potential members – either through hard copy documentation, Web site, or other which includes affinity and benefit programs of local, provincial/territorial and national or combination of all and member-to-member discount programs. Include benefits sheet.
- 2) Must have membership sales material – which can be used to solicit members. Include sales kit/materials.
- 3) Must have someone whose responsibility it is to sell and service members for the chamber – can be a permanent staff member, someone on retainer. Identify on organizational chart who fields sales calls for the chamber.
- 4) Must be able to demonstrate that there is a sales and retention plan in place for chamber members. Include sales and retention plan.

- 5) Must be able to demonstrate that a regular review of benefits and services offered by the chamber occurs to ensure that the chamber is offering products that are valuable to their members (see Strategic Planning section). Describe the process for reviewing the membership benefits.

d) Services

- 1) Through the above mechanisms and other means, the chamber must be able to demonstrate that they are “the voice of business” in the given community (could be demonstrated through the use of a tagline on publications, media coverage, correspondence, etc.) Include chamber materials that include tagline the “voice of business”.
- 2) Must be able to respond in a professional manner to enquiries regarding the general business community of the region. Describe how business enquiries would be handled within the chamber.
- 3) Must be able to assist members in business mentoring, either through events geared to professional development or other events. Describe mentoring program at work in your chamber.

3

MANDATORY

ORGANIZATION/ADMINISTRATION

a) Mission

- 1) This requirement is to determine if the mission statement of the organization is clearly defined in documentation. (The mission may sometimes be referred to as the object or objective of the chamber or board of trade). Include the chamber’s mission statement.

b) Bylaws

For all chambers, attach the bylaws of the organization. The following items will be verified against the bylaws document.

- 1) Name of the chamber must clearly reflect the area that is represented by the chamber. Highlight chamber name in bylaw document.
- 2) The purpose of the chamber, as identified in the bylaws, must clearly reflect the role of the chamber. Highlight chamber’s purpose.
- 3) Membership criteria must be clearly defined in the bylaws. Highlight membership criteria.
- 4) Procedures for dues collection, resignations, delinquent accounts and expulsion must be clearly defined in the bylaws. Highlight dues collection procedures.
- 5) Procedures and timing for the election of directors must be clearly defined in the bylaws. Highlight election processes.
- 6) Procedures and timing for the election of officers must be clearly defined in the bylaws. Highlight these.
- 7) Officers’ duties must be clearly defined in the bylaws? Highlight officers’ duties.
- 8) The indemnification (saved harmless clause) of officers must be clearly stated in the bylaws. Highlight the wording in your bylaws.
- 9) Required quorums for various meetings, e.g. board, executive committee, committees, membership, etc. must be clearly stated. Highlight the area which refers to quorums.
- 10) Bylaws must address attendance/tenure issues – i.e. if a director or officer misses meetings, what are the stipulations for tenure? Highlight these passages within bylaws.
- 11) Bylaws must have a statement regarding signing authorities and responsibilities regarding chamber funds.
- 12) Fiscal year must be clearly delineated in the bylaws. Highlight within your bylaws.
- 13) Auditing/review procedure must be identified in the bylaws. Highlight the procedure within your bylaws.
- 14) If chamber dissolution were required, procedure must be outlined in the bylaws. Highlight dissolution clause.

- 15) If amendments are required to the existing bylaws, is the procedure identified in the bylaws? Highlight amendment procedures.
- 16) Voting methods must be clearly stated in the bylaws. Highlight voting procedures section.
- 17) The procedure for filling vacancies on boards and/or committees must be clearly identified in the bylaws. Highlight vacancy procedure.
- 18) Parliamentary procedure must be noted and followed through the bylaws application. Highlight this notation in the bylaws.
- 19) Appointments to, the duties and roles of, procedures and responsibilities for committees, task forces, councils or other decision making bodies within the chamber must be clearly explained in the bylaws. Highlight these areas.
- 20) Documentation procedures – attach a copy of the policy that outlines what is documented, how it is done, how long records are kept and how you dispose of them.

c) Incorporation

Attach a copy of the chamber's Articles of Incorporation or Charter.

d) Officers and Directors

Attach the following:

- The document which outlines detailed job descriptions (if not detailed in bylaws) should outline responsibilities and authority of the elected officers and directors.
 - One copy each of the minutes of the three most recent board meetings. Items of a confidential nature can be blacked out.
 - One copy each of the minutes of the three most recent board executive committee meetings (if your governance model requires an executive committee council). Block out any confidential items.
- 1) The roles and descriptions must be clearly defined, current and complete.
 - 2) These job descriptions will be reviewed to assess whether they are focused on objectives, identify responsibilities and identify accountability.

Attach an outline showing when officer and director orientation takes place, participants, who facilitates, what is covered and the handout materials used.

Attach a document that identifies the schedule for board meetings.

e) Organizational Structure

Attach a formalized chart that clearly shows the organization's structure.

- 1) The positions of leadership, names of individuals, and lines of authority and responsibility must be shown on the chart, including affiliates.
- 2) Attach the following – job descriptions for committees, showing purpose, goals, authority, accountability and procedure for reporting.
- 3) **Attach** committee chair job descriptions.
- 4) Committee tasks - describe how the committees relate to overall goals, objectives and priorities of the chamber.

Attach committee orientation manual or document. This document should outline when orientation takes place; what is presented and reviewed; and what is given to attendees for future use and guidance.

f) Finance

Attach a copy of your chamber's financial statements (audit/review) for the last two years. Attach a copy of the current budget and copies of the chamber's three most recent financial reports or ensure that you include a copy of the minutes with the adoption of financial reports.

- 1) The procedures for financial transactions must be spelled out in the bylaws and/or procedures manual, including such things as delinquent dues. Describe or indicate.
- 2) Indicate that the chamber's financial reports include monthly and year-to-date income expenses and current balance sheet.

G) Staff/personnel

Attach the chamber's personnel and procedures manual.

- 1) Attach job descriptions for management and non-management staff positions which indicate that staff has clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- 2) Attach evaluation forms for management and non-management positions and indicate that staff performance and salary reviews are performed by attaching documentation for such a process.
- 3) Senior executive must hold regular staff meetings with all staff. Attach an agenda from such a staff meeting.
- 4) Does the chamber have a policy of professional development for the chamber staff? Attach training plan or line item in budget.

The personnel and procedures manual must clearly include the following:

- 5) Clearly identified vacation schedule (highlight). If no paid staff, indicate who responds to enquiries in the event of vacations.
- 6) Documentation that indicates what the statutory holidays are and what the pay schedule for those holidays is (highlight) if there is paid staff.
- 7) Documents must indicate the chamber's sick leave policy. Highlight. If no paid staff, describe what happens should illness curtail activity.
- 8) Travel policy for all staff when traveling on chamber business – highlighted within document.
- 9) All employee benefits must be fully explained in the personnel and procedures manual. Highlight employee benefits.

4

GOVERNANCE

- 1) Must be incorporated either federally or provincially; note that this requirement is also found in Operations/Administration. If your

application includes both sections, you need only supply once but reference its location here as well.

- 2) Financial statements must be prepared in accordance with bylaws and in accordance with provincial requirements.
- 3) Must hold an Annual General Meeting open to all members. Include the notice for your most recent annual meeting.
- 4) Must have a paid membership. Include membership fee scale.
- 5) Must have an elected board of directors with a mandated function and regularly scheduled meetings. Include current board meeting schedule.
- 6) Must have an elected executive council (if appropriate to your bylaws) with a mandated function and regularly scheduled meetings. Include executive council information and meeting schedule as organization dictates.
- 7) Must produce agendas and record minutes of board of directors' and executive council meetings. Include sample minutes and agendas.
- 8) Executive succession plan. Describe your chamber's succession planning.
- 9) Must follow procedural rules as noted in bylaws. Highlight what procedural rules the chamber follows.
- 10) Must maintain policies manual, i.e. a stated record of what policies the chamber is working on and where they stand on these issues. If your chamber's manual is multi-paged, submit an example from your manual.
- 11) Must maintain directors' and officers' insurance; include proof of this insurance. This is also required under section 3 – if you have already included for this section, reference here.
- 12) Must have paid administrative staff. Include staff list.
- 13) Must have a code of conduct/code of ethics. Include a copy of this document.
- 14) Must have a defined chain of authority including all officials and staff and spokespersons. Include document that illustrates this.
- 15) Must have a fully developed human resources policy including a harassment policy. Include Human Resources policy
- 16) Must have an investment policy and mechanism. Describe.

5

STRATEGIC PLANNING

(See Appendixes for assistance with this section)

- 1) Must have a strategic plan that sets out the course for the organization for a minimum of three years. Include this document.
- 2) Must have performed a SWOT analysis of the organization. This process will be conducted with the board of directors. Indicate how the SWOT analysis has been conducted.
- 3) Must be able to identify, through a strategic planning process, key strategic areas of the chamber of commerce and have them documented. Describe your chamber's key strategic areas.
- 4) Must have documentation which clearly outlines the mission statement, reflecting that the chamber of commerce is the voice of business within the community that it serves. Highlight in documentation where the chamber identifies itself as the voice of business.
- 5) Must have strategic plan document that denotes the organization's goals for a specific period of time (as a minimum three years) and the plan should be updated every three years. Describe the process for updating the plan.
- 6) There must be a strategic planning process with the board of directors and committees. Describe how the directors & committees have input into the strategic planning process.
- 7) Must have regularly scheduled review sessions for the strategic plan with a minimum of once per year. Describe the strategic plan review process.
- 8) Must be aware of and provide input/feedback as necessary into the provincial/territorial strategic plans. Describe how your chamber has participated in this process.
- 9) Must have regular updates to membership on the strategic plan and the achievements to date of strategic goals and objectives (could be through newsletter, annual report, and information sessions). Provide examples of membership updates on the strategic plan.

- 10) Must demonstrate that the strategic plan has been distributed to community stakeholders such as the municipal council, MPPs/MLAs/MPs. Describe how the plan has been circulated to stakeholders outside the membership.
- 11) Must conduct an annual, regularly scheduled strategic planning day(s) with the board, committees and key staff members. Must include a SWOT analysis. Include an agenda from the most recent planning session.
- 12) Must regularly survey members for input purposes for both the strategic plan and business plan on a minimum yearly basis. Include the results of the most recent survey.

a) Strategic Plan

Include a copy of the strategic plan

- 1) Must be able to demonstrate that the strategic plan links into provincial/territorial and national chambers' strategic plans. Possibilities for inclusion: policy development, advocacy alerts, communiqués, etc.
- 2) Must post strategic plan (or summary thereof) on the chamber of commerce Web site. Include hard copy of Web site page that includes strategic plan.
- 3) Must demonstrate that meetings to discuss strategic plan with key stakeholders have taken place. Include agenda, minutes, etc. indicating that these meetings have occurred.

b) Business Plan

Include a copy of the business plan

- 1) Must have a formalized goal setting process/program in place to determine the business plan and its components. Describe the process of this goal setting exercise.
- 2) Must have regularly scheduled business plan-setting session(s) with a minimum of once per year. Include agenda or outcomes from your most recent meeting.

- 3) Must have a regularly scheduled review of the business plan with a minimum of two times per year. Include agendas/minutes/outcomes from most recent meeting.
- 4) Responsibilities must be clearly defined adjacent to objectives within the business plan. Responsibilities may be assigned with staff, board or committee members. Highlight responsibilities within document.
- 5) Must have consistent/regularly-scheduled process for the review of goals with a minimum of a yearly occurrence with board and staff. Include documentation which indicates process.
- 6) Must be able to demonstrate that there are separate communications and marketing, advocacy, membership recruitment and retention and financial plans as subcomponents to the business plan, identifying the various ways in which objectives from the business plan will be met. Include appropriate documentation highlighting sections as outlined above.

APPENDIXES

Strategic Planning

The following definitions may assist chambers as they work towards accreditation of chambers in the area of **strategic planning**.

Strategic Plan – A strategic plan is the process of developing and maintaining a strategic fit between the organization's goals and capabilities and its changing marketing opportunities. Strategic planning “sets the stage” for all other planning in the chamber of commerce. The strategic planning process relies on the chamber of commerce being able to set a clear mission and defining objectives that support this mission.

The strategic plan sets out the vision for an organization for a specific period of time. This document, created by doing a detailed environmental scan at the time of its creation, outlines the chamber's strengths and capitalizes on them. By recognizing those areas where the organization has strengths and weaknesses and addressing them through a realistic plan, it can hope to strengthen and grow the organization over the time frame offered by the strategic plan. The plan is set for a specific time such as three or five years. The strategic plan should be a dynamic document that can grow and change with the organization.

Mission statement – A statement of the chamber of commerce's purpose, i.e. what it wants to achieve in the larger environment. The mission statement guides people within the organization – staff and volunteers so that they can work independently and yet collectively toward overall organizational objectives. Mission statements should be realistic and specific and they should also fit the market and focus on the chamber/board's distinctive competencies (i.e. what makes them different from other organizations that exist within their region).

SWOT Analysis – This is a brainstorming tool that should be used during the lead up to any strategic planning sessions. The acronym SWOT actually stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. This process allows the organization to perform an environmental scan both internal and external to the organization and do a best/worst case scenario for their organization – looking at both presently existing and known situations. It also allows the chamber to focus on what they are good at and can realistically achieve.

Examples:

Strength

- Excellent relationships with community stakeholders such as elected officials, BIA, and civic staff
- Strong membership base
- Strong financial situation
- Strong, active volunteer base who are committed to the chamber's work

Weakness

- Membership numbers are dropping
- Due to membership drop, finances are dropping
- Office technology has not kept pace with the outside world, leaving staff unable to communicate with members in the most efficient manner
- Unable to keep office staff due to low wages

Opportunity

- New industries have come to the area, bringing with them an influx of new residents and services
- Member computer company has offered to outfit the whole office with new equipment in lieu of two years of membership fees
- The region is divesting itself of the tourism office; the chamber has the opportunity to operate it

Threat

- A competing business organization has opened a satellite office in the neighbouring community

- The office lease will expire in less than two years and the landlord needs the space
- The chamber's general manager is planning to retire in one year after having served the chamber for 29 years
- The local economy is sagging; two major industries have closed in the last 18 months

Goals – Set out in the strategic plan, goals are those things that the organization hopes to achieve over the lifespan of the strategic planning document.

Business Plan – Arising out of the strategic plan is the business plan. This plan sets realistic and measurable goals. The business plan's term is much shorter than that of the strategic plan and is usually created for one year. The business plan is strongly linked to current resources to achieve the objectives that it sets out.

Each goal that is set out in the business plan is then followed by specific objectives to achieve each goal.

The business plan may be a number of separate plans that relate to achieving the goals; these plans could include a communications plan, a marketing plan (or combination of the two), a financial plan, a membership recruitment and retention plan, etc.

Objectives – Set out in the business plan, objectives are specific and can be measurable and are usually accomplished within the short term, i.e. a year.