

The logo consists of four overlapping, curved, leaf-like shapes in a light orange color, arranged in a cross-like pattern. The background is a solid, darker orange color.

Kelowna Chamber

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2023

November 2020

Helping grow the people who power the Okanagan.

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The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to connecting, serving, and empowering the Kelowna and region business community. The Chamber provides numerous services to its 1,000 members and the broader business community including educational seminars, major events, member benefits, and government advocacy. In 2021, the Kelowna Chamber will celebrate its 115th year and it continues to be recognized as one of BC's leading business associations and among the leaders in the Canadian Chamber network. The Chamber invests 100% of the revenue it receives back into programs and services that continually add value to members, ultimately growing the Chamber's reputation and membership base. The Board is elected from the membership and comprises leaders from various industry sectors and operates with a policy governance model and succession leadership that ensures efficiencies and strategic long-term outcomes.

OUR VISION

We are the indispensable business organization in Kelowna and area.

OUR MISSION

We exist to foster a positive business environment by providing members with leadership, advocacy, and services of value.

OUR VALUES

Trust ✖ **Passion** ✖ **Shared Ownership** ✖ **Continual Improvement** ✖ **Organizational Excellence**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out the strategic priorities of the Chamber for 2021-2023. These priorities were developed by the Board of the Kelowna Chamber during deeply uncertain times. COVID-19 has changed the business, economic, and personal lives of citizens throughout the world and Kelowna is no exception. As of the writing of this plan, it is still unknown when (or if) the pandemic will no longer affect daily life. It is reasonable to expect that the influence of COVID-19 will be a factor for most of the planning period.

The Key Performance Areas (Goals) as identified by the Board are:

1. **Grow Membership** by strengthening the Chamber's value proposition
2. **Be the Leader in Advocating for an Improved Economic Environment** while entrenching our position as the voice of business in Kelowna and Okanagan Valley
3. **Determine the future of the Chamber's Building** while ensuring short and long-term office and operational needs are met.

The three goals identified by the Board are shown in several different ways for ease of understanding how those specific priorities fit into the broader overarching pillars of the Canadian Chamber Accreditation Framework. The Chamber was re-accredited in 2019, a professional designation which continues until 2022.

The first section of this document captures the Board's goals along with suggested strategies. The second section of this document expands on the Board's goals, objectives, and expected outcomes which are meant to strengthen the Chamber over the course of this plan, ultimately increasing the value we provide to our members and the community. Expected outcomes have been added to establish general indicators of progress towards achieving the identified goals.

This strategic plan is the foundation that the organization's business plan is built upon and is not intended as a stand-alone document. Staff work plans are also informed by this and previous strategic planning efforts, ongoing membership engagement, and past operational experience. The Chamber also understands that we live in a dynamic environment where issues emerge that may require adjustments to work plans to accommodate such change. The impact of COVID-19 is a good example of the requirement to be flexible as an organization to respond to emerging issues that impact members, the business community, and the Chamber as an organization.

ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

The Kelowna Chamber is a nationally “Accredited Chamber” under the accreditation program established and maintained by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. There are three identified pillars in this program, and they provide the framework that ensures the Chamber has solid business practices in place and the Chamber’s operations are of the highest standard. The three pillars of accreditation are shown in the graphic below and are a guide when establishing strategic priorities and operational workplans.



CONTEXT OF THE PLAN

The current plan was created following a one day retreat with the Board of Directors in August 2020 and subsequent discussion by the Board and Executive Committee, the latter being charged under its terms of reference to monitor the progress of the Board's Strategic Plan. This plan should be considered a living document that is subject to change if and as necessary and reviewed and updated annually by the Board.

Another important element the Board considered while discussing the priorities for the three-year plan was the continuing pressure on membership numbers. Although membership revenues remain relatively strong, for the Chamber to retain its relevance as representative of the business community, attention to membership numbers, particularly in this time of deep economic uncertainty (COVID-19), remains a major concern and is a primary priority of this plan.

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS (Goals):

The previously identified goals are listed below with some additional explanation to assist in understanding the Board's proposed direction under each goal.

1. GROW MEMBERSHIP BY STRENGTHENING THE CHAMBER'S VALUE PROPOSITION

Recruit, engage, and retain members who represent a diverse membership base to ensure the continued credibility of the Chamber as the leading organization representing Kelowna's business community.

2. BE THE LEADER IN ADVOCATING FOR AN IMPROVED ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT WHILE ENTRENCHING OUR POSITION AS THE VOICE OF BUSINESS IN KELOWNA AND THE OKANAGAN

Continue to lead the region in advocacy while sustaining our role as a collaborative partner in enhancing the economic environment of the city, region, and province.

3. DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF THE CHAMBER'S BUILDING WHILE ENSURING SHORT AND LONG-TERM OFFICE AND OPERATIONAL NEEDS ARE MET.

Plan for the future of our building (or its replacement) as it approaches the end of the lease period (2026) while also considering the effectiveness of our recent move to virtual work.

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

Goal #1: GROW MEMBERSHIP BY STRENGTHENING OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Context

Generally, the Board endorsed the current membership program including:

- Confirmation that the Chamber is a generalist, big tent organization representing broad business interests.
- The current tiered pricing strategy was confirmed and endorsed. This delivers more revenue per member, resulting in two distinct outcomes that will be used to measure success, total revenue from membership as well as total number of members. More revenue means greater investment into programs and services that benefit members.
- Advocacy on behalf of member (and all business) interests remains a core offering of the Chamber.

Strategy 1.1 – REVIEW RETENTION PLAN AND ENSURE IT IS AMONG THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY

Undertake a thorough review of the Chamber’s Retention Plan with third party assistance to ensure the Chamber is implementing “best practices” in onboarding and retaining new members. This work should include:

- Reviewing the Chamber’s current process for identifying reasons for not renewing to determine if there are better approaches to managing that feedback that yield valuable insights.
- Develop and produce an easy to read dashboard that summarizes the number of members at each level and where they fit in the current membership segmentation quadrants.

Strategy 1.2 – REVIEW & ENHANCE PROGRAMS ENSURING THEY ALIGN WITH QUADRANTS (SEGMENTATION) OF MEMBERSHIP AND ATTRACT A DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

Determine the value of creating specific programs and initiatives to attract targeted demographics such as young entrepreneurs, women in business, and newcomers looking to establish themselves in the local business community by developing specific stand-alone programs or through partnering with other organizations already operating in this area (i.e., with COEDC’s OYP). This includes evaluating the proposed Leadership Program under discussion with Okanagan College and others.

Strategy 1.3 – POSITION THE CHAMBER AS THE “GO TO” ORGANIZATION FOR LOCAL BUSINESS INTEL

Work with the BC Chamber to become a MindReader Community Champion to access local data on business insights. Create an economic indicator report card using data from Stats Canada and other sources with a goal of creating a monthly dashboard for the City and region.

Strategy 1.4 – EXAMINE OPTIONS TO MAKE OUR ONLINE DIRECTORY MORE ROBUST AND MAKE ACCESS TO IT EASIER FOR MEMBERS/NON-MEMBERS

Explore options to improve our member directory and to better showcase our members through various means ranging from consideration of a chamber app to the publication of a buyer's guide.

Strategy 1.5 – DEVELOP A REVITALIZED MARKETING STRATEGY

Create a refreshed Marketing Plan that is adequately resourced and:

- Targets specific demographics which we see as potential future members such as business students at Okanagan School of Business.
- Captures ways to make our current members our best advocates through initiatives such as a revamped testimonial and referral program.
- Uses curated data on current and past members to identify opportunities to “win-back” members who may have been a part of the network in the past and use that information to entice them to re-join.
- More aggressively promotes our cost-saving benefit (affinity) programs and identifies opportunities for new or enhanced offerings.
- Includes a strategy to share stories about our policy and advocacy work (wins) using real businesses and people if/as possible.

Strategy 1.6 – BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH THE USE OF VOLUNTEERS, PRACTICUM STUDENTS, CO-OP STUDENTS, AND INTERN POSITIONS

Expand the number of volunteers participating in the Chamber's Ambassador program in order to leverage their enthusiasm to engage new and renewing members while tapping into their expertise and willingness to help with various events and programs. Consider other opportunities to build internal capacity including accessing practicum students or CO-OP students from UBC Okanagan and Okanagan College.

Goal # 2: BE THE LEADER IN ADVOCATING FOR A BETTER ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT WHILE ENTRENCHING OUR POSITION AS THE VOICE OF BUSINESS IN KELOWNA AND THE OKANAGAN

Context

There are few chambers in BC that are as active on the policy and advocacy front as the Kelowna Chamber. However, recognizing that the board wishes greater emphasis on adding value to members (as a means to grow membership), the Board has identified that maintaining the current momentum and focus in this area will be sufficient for the term of this plan. With that said, the Kelowna Chamber already has significant credibility in this area, a reputation that will be protected going forward.

In the current environment, organizations such as Chambers and Boards of Trade in the Okanagan are struggling, both financially and with membership and advocacy. The discussion on this strategic topic was centred around the opportunity and/or value in developing shared service models with other Chambers. The Board believes that the top priority must be on serving our members and the Kelowna and area business community and that nothing should be undertaken which might put that priority at risk.

Strategy 2.1 – BUILD ADVOCACY PLANS AROUND ALL ACTIVE POLICY POSITIONS

Continue to advocate on current high priority issues including removal of the speculation tax, a reduction in fees and charges related to housing (i.e., DCCs), accelerating regional transportation planning and infrastructure investments (i.e., the upcoming commercial goods study), and pushing for support in the areas of mental health, homelessness, and addictions.

Strategy 2.2 - ENGAGE MEMBERS DIRECTLY ON POLICY ISSUES THROUGH AN ANNUAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT FORUM AND REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS THAT SEEK THEIR OPINIONS

Continue to hold a member-only policy development forum to engage members in deeper discussions on what is keeping them up at night. Survey on specific issues with regular frequency (monthly) to increase the level of engagement with members (i.e., Question of the week or month).

Strategy 2.3 - CONTINUE TO SET THE PACE IN DEVELOPING AND TABLING POLICY RESOLUTIONS AT THE BC AND CANADIAN CHAMBERS

The Board has noted the need to maintain its capacity and involvement with policy and advocacy. They desire the Chamber to develop and table a minimum of three policy resolutions each year on issues important to members that are of provincial and/or national significance.

Strategy 2.4 - ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS AS THEY BUILD COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLANS

There are several initiatives that the Kelowna Chamber is involved with that impact the economic well-being of members and the business community, both in the short- and long-term. In its position as a leading non-governmental organization, the Chamber is well positioned to channel its advocacy through local economic development agencies to accelerate economic recovery from COVID-19 and shape a positive economic environment in the long term. The Chamber's participation in the COEDC's COVID Response efforts is an example of this type of collaborative action. It will be important for the Chamber to define its role in these efforts: leading when needed, partnering when appropriate and simply supporting when required.

Strategy 2.5 – STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH WESTBANK FIRST NATION (WFN) BY IDENTIFYING AREAS OF COLLABORATION AS A MEANS OF HELPING BOTH ORGANIZATIONS ACHIEVE THEIR STRATEGIC GOALS

The Board recently added an advisory position to the Board from WFN, however there is an identified need to build on that relationship tapping into the experience of the BC Chamber and other Chambers which have established strong and respectful relationships with local Indigenous communities. This effort would align with economic reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples that is an identified priority of both the BC and Canadian Chambers which of course the Kelowna Chamber is a part of.

Strategy 2.6 – SEEK OUT PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO MUTUALLY ADDRESS KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES SUCH AS FUTURE LABOUR FORCE NEEDS

The City of Kelowna's Economic Scorecard (2019) identified several areas where the city is behind its peers. This economic scorecard provides an evidence-based view of Kelowna's performance in comparison to 16 other North American and international cities. With an aging demographic, attracting youth and a diverse population will be vital in addressing long-term labour force needs, and this need represents an area where the Chamber could play a critical role.

Strategy 2.7 – BUILD AND ENHANCE CROSS VALLEY INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE VALLEY POLICY ALLIANCE, VALLEYWIDE BUSINESS EXPO, AND COVID-19 RESPONSE (OK WE GOT THIS)

The Chamber should build on the success it has achieved in partnering with other Chambers in the Okanagan on initiatives such as the Valley Policy Alliance, the ValleyWide (B2B) Business Expo, and the recently created COVID Response Coalition (#OKWeGotThis).

Strategy 2.8 – CONTINUE TO BE A LEADER/FACILITATOR OF COLLABORATION WITH OTHER CHAMBERS IN THE REGION

Develop a standby plan to ensure services can be offered to other Chambers and their members if they need some assistance remaining sustainable through the pandemic. Kelowna should be ready to quickly and efficiently reach out to those Chambers which might be struggling to provide support, however, only if it does not adversely impact the Kelowna Chamber's sustainability.

Goal # 3: DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF THE CHAMBER'S BUILDING

Context:

The current 10-year property lease on which our building sits expires in 2026 and action over the next year is needed to determine the Chamber's future at the current site. While the Chamber owns the building, it leases the property from the City of Kelowna which has a 30-year head lease with the Province which also expires in 2026. There are current capital improvements needed, some of which are relatively large cost items such as the HVAC units that are reaching the end of their lifecycle, which must be evaluated in the short term. The building may be much larger than required for our operations. We have leased out part of the building in the past but since our last tenant left have been unable to lease it out. The City of Kelowna has advised that any other occupant must be another non-profit, approved by the City. On a positive note, we were successful in reducing our property taxes after the last tenant left. If we either choose not to sign a new lease or are unable to, it would take considerable lead time to build or lease appropriate space for our operations. A decision must be made in this planning cycle (by 2022).

Strategy 3.1 – ENLIST BOARD MEMBERS TO EXAMINE THE OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE BUILDING/OFFICE LOCATION.

Strike a task force to determine the appropriate strategy for the upcoming lease period ending on the building (2026) and the required capital expenditures in the interim. This task force must consider:

- The value of the building as a service to members. Do members use it? Does the building itself add value to members? Is there brand value in it? What are the operational needs for staff use?
- What is the process with the City and the Province to determine what is likely to happen in 2026?
- During COVID we have been able to work remotely. Doing more of that may be an option for the future.
- Use the planned member research to develop an understanding of member value in the building.

Strategy 3.2 – WORK WITH THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE A FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR OF THE BUILDING.

Regardless of the discussions by the Task Force noted above, we expect to be in the current location at least until 2025 and that means minor capital improvements will need to be considered to ensure the building doesn't fall into disrepair.

Strategy 3.3 – ESTABLISH A VOLUNTEER WORKING GROUP OF BOARD MEMBERS, AMBASSADORS OR MEMBERS THAT WILL HELP TO IMPROVE THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING WITH A FOCUS ON THE FRONT ENTRANCE.

Since the departure of Tourism Kelowna, the front entrance of the building has been cleaned up a bit but remains in flux and does not give the greatest impression to visiting members, potential members, or dignitaries. The cost to contract someone to improve the front entrance would likely be significant and would be a low priority during budget discussions. It is thought that a volunteer working group with construction skills might be able to help address this issue.

(END)