

The Process

The 2019-20 Chamber Board of Directors and the Chamber staff made the decision that it was time to think intentionally about the future direction of the Boone Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber CEO had been in the role for 3 years, Chamber membership was strong, and Chamber programs were well received. What was lacking was a clear sense of where the Chamber was going and how they were going to get there. To create the Chamber's 3-Year Strategic Framework, the Executive Board and staff met in December for a strategic planning retreat. They discussed desired outcomes and created shared expectations for the process. They also identified key stakeholders from the ranks of Chamber staff, Board officers, Board members, and Chamber at-large members who would be part of three focus groups who would participate in the process.

The three groups then went through an identical process of looking inward at the Chamber and identifying the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and outward at the Chamber's environment and identified the organization's opportunities and threats. Based on their discussions, each of the groups identified the top strategic imperatives on which they felt the Chamber should focus their time and energy for the next three years.

The Covid-19 pandemic did interrupt the process at this point. Rather than halting the strategic planning process, two things emerged: 1) The Chamber wasted no time implementing changes to its operations that were put forward by the Chamber members in the focus groups. The Chamber's response to the pandemic was partially guided by what they learned from the at-large members. 2) The goal still was to have a 3-Year Strategic Framework to submit to the Board at the July retreat, so the Board and staff continued the work through the pandemic. While it might have been nice to have wrapped up the process in April, the journey of this document has been impacted by everything going on around it, and there is a sense of extra appreciation of it as a result.

The Executive Board and staff reconvened in May to examine the results and look for common themes. They realized the richness of the data was a direct result of having the different perspectives at the table, and each perspective was critical to the final product. The Strategic Framework addresses the Chamber's areas of focus that will allow them to fulfill their mission. The five key priorities identified in the document will inform and guide the work of the Boone Chamber of Commerce in the coming years. This framework is an evolving document that allows for change.

Strategic Imperative 1: Operational Excellence - Create Operational Excellence by maximizing our resources and evaluating our procedures.

Strategic Imperative 2: Advocacy - Serve as the regional leader in business advocacy by leading important conversations that will move the region forward.

Strategic Imperative 3: Connection - Enhance value to members through connecting members to the Chamber, to each other and to the resources and opportunities that will help members succeed.

Strategic Imperative 4: Education - Build off success of providing excellent educational opportunities that will provide Chamber members with the knowledge, strategies, and tools to support their success.

Strategic Imperative 5: Community - Actively participate in the creation of a thriving, sustainable community in the High Country. Community Development is Business Development.

The next step is an implementation plan with would include the prioritization of initiatives and the creation of specific action items and key measurements that will be used to determine the success of the Chamber's efforts in carrying out the plan over the next three years. What is clear is that as it is implemented, this Strategic Framework will provide a solid road map to allow the Chamber to continue to evolve and be a leader in both the industry as well as the community.