




THE INDISPENSABLE PARTNER OF BUSINESS

2020-2025 Strategic Plan





We are at a pivotal moment in the history of the chamber of commerce movement. Today's chamber member doesn't have the same needs as those of 20 years ago. The pace of change, fueled by technology and new ways of doing business, means that the OCC and our Chamber Network must adapt in order to deliver optimum value to our members.

For more than a century, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has served as the non-partisan, voice of business in the province. Together with 135 member chambers of commerce and boards of trade, we stand up for our 60,000 members and advocate for evidence-based public policies that contribute to a competitive economy and increased prosperity for our communities. The term “business” itself has evolved, reflecting a diverse ecosystem that includes post-secondary institutions and other not-for-profit groups that each play an important role in contributing to Ontario's competitiveness. Without question, being the “voice of business” is important – but it is only the beginning of our value proposition as chambers. There is much more that we must do to unlock the full potential of the 21st century chamber movement in Ontario.

Businesses need a partner that is always in their corner. A partner that helps them navigate through daily challenges and connects them to new business opportunities.

To sustain relevancy and take membership value to the next level, we present our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, which positions the OCC and its Chamber Network as **indispensable partners of business**. To realize this goal, the Plan includes 4 main strategies:

1. **Optimize Policy and Advocacy Offering for Maximum Impact and Value**
2. **New Services to Strengthen Businesses**
3. **Strengthen Chamber Network Capacity and Brand**
4. **Renew Internal Systems and Leverage Technology**

Our strategic plan builds on the success of our advocacy work and current programming. It charts a path to broaden our service offerings. It seeks to increase connections and unlock expertise across our membership. It provides greater opportunity for members to engage with us to develop practical solutions to our most pressing economic challenges, while protecting the integrity of our work. Furthermore, it supports our member chambers in their efforts to increase their own value proposition. Most importantly, it positions the OCC and our Chamber Network for long-term relevance and sustainability.

Businesses of all sizes are looking for new opportunities to grow. Yet, an ever-increasing skills gap is affecting their ability to succeed. A regulatory environment that too often seems to work against them is making it harder to remain competitive. From these challenges come tremendous opportunities for the OCC to bring new value to our members as their trusted partner for growth.

Our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan enables us to deliver the relevance, engagement, and practical value to help strengthen Ontario businesses and contribute to the prosperity of our communities.

YOU TOLD US. WE LISTENED.

The development of this plan was informed by an extensive consultation process in 2018-2019 with the OCC's member chambers and boards of trade, local chamber members, OCC direct corporate members, partner organizations, and key stakeholders. The ideas, needs and opportunities gathered from across OCC membership have been critical in determining areas of focus that will drive membership value and sustainable growth over the next five years.

- **10** roundtable consultation events across Ontario, engaging **27** Organization members and **120+** local member participants
- **15** individual interviews with Chamber Network leaders
- 2019 AGM workshop with **53** participating Chamber Network members
- **10** corporate member interviews
- Preliminary Chamber Network Needs Survey, generating **291** unique needs statements
- Board of Directors Strategic Planning Workshop
- Staff workshops and individual consultations
- Consultations with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, **5** provincial chambers, U.S. state chambers
- Additional research (competitor offerings and international best practices)

OUR VISION

We aspire to be the most respected, trusted, and indispensable partner of business, driving government decision-making and leveraging assets across our province-wide membership to support their growth and a competitive business climate in Ontario.

OUR MISSION

The OCC convenes, aligns, and advances the interests of our members through principled policy work, value-added business services, and broad engagement to build prosperity for all Ontarians.

STRATEGY 1: OPTIMIZE POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFERING FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT AND VALUE

The OCC will introduce new ways to optimize our policy and advocacy work to more thoroughly support the needs of both direct corporate and affiliated members and generate new sources of revenue for the organization.

ACTIONS

- Continue the transition from traditional sponsorship to partnership model, wherein members invest in policy files, rather than individual reports.
- Establish a series of permanent policy councils to build capacity on broad policy files (e.g. infrastructure, energy) and deliver sustainable corporate membership value and increase alignment with Chamber Network members.
- Review the policy development and prioritization process to ensure optimum impact and value for all member segments.
- Create digestible, “street friendly” versions of policy/advocacy reports and expand use of technology (e.g. video, mobile, podcasts, etc.) to ensure key messages resonate at the community level.



OUTCOMES

- ✓ Increased relevancy and value of advocacy across member segments, government, and appropriate stakeholders.
- ✓ Increased reach.
- ✓ Increased level of business engagement, membership.
- ✓ Potential for new revenue stream to support ongoing member services.

STRATEGY 2: NEW SERVICES TO STRENGTHEN BUSINESSES

Being the indispensable partner of business means delivering continuous value to help our members grow and compete in the global economy. The OCC will expand upon existing SME programs and services and introduce new offerings that help our members navigate change, address core business challenges and connect to new business partners and customers.

ACTIONS

- As a major strategic activity and in collaboration with identified organizations, the OCC will position local chambers to be the partners of the business community, in helping to meet the talent needs of their members. Sample activities include:
 - ◇ Expand the OCC's international trade services to include inbound/outbound trade activities with key geographic markets. Align with other trade partners and deliver in collaboration with Chamber Network partners (2020-2021).
 - ◇ Assess viability of business-to-business procurement platform (2022-2023)
 - ◇ Explore opportunities to offer in-market consulting services for Ontario exporters (2021).
 - ◇ Develop partnerships aimed at helping business members access sources of capital to support their growth and delivered in partnership with Chamber Network members.
 - ◇ Expand small business learning programs and deliver curriculum provincewide (2022).



OUTCOMES

- ✓ Increased membership value.
- ✓ Increased membership engagement across the Chamber Network.
- ✓ New, sustainable revenue sources for the OCC and its Chamber Network members.

STRATEGY 3: STRENGTHEN CHAMBER NETWORK CAPACITY AND BRAND

The strength of the Chamber Network is defined as much by its weakest links as it is by the top performers. To promote and deliver on our shared vision as the indispensable partner of business, the OCC will support capacity building and brand awareness in collaboration with current stakeholders and other identified partners.

ACTIONS

- Leverage expertise across the Network to deliver a suite of web-enabled learning services to chamber managers, volunteers and their members on critical issues such as governance and management. Deliver in partnership with other organizations such as Chamber Executives of Ontario (CEO), Canadian Chamber of Commerce, as appropriate (Launch 2020).
- Launch online member services portal by Q2 2020 and gradually expand online resources through 2024.
- By 2021, develop “best practice” models/templates of regional collaboration (advocacy, events, etc.) and share these across membership.
- By 2021, work with Canadian Chamber of Commerce and provincial chambers to deliver a grassroots chamber brand awareness campaign.
- Increase OCC corporate membership base and implement membership policies that support Chamber Network through local memberships / revenue as OCC direct corporate membership base grows. Implement new policy by June 2020.



OUTCOMES

- ✓ Stronger value proposition at community level.
- ✓ Increased awareness of chamber brand.
- ✓ Consistent service delivery level across provincial network.
- ✓ Stronger local chamber governance.
- ✓ Increased effectiveness of advocacy.
- ✓ Increased membership and engagement.
- ✓ Increased OCC and Chamber Network market penetration rates & revenue as a result of stronger chambers.

STRATEGY 4: RENEW INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

Through modest investments in technology and the renewal of internal systems and processes, the OCC will increase internal productivity and collaboration, and improve upon existing financial controls and membership management framework.

ACTIONS

- By 2021, modernize internal accounting systems
- By 2021, refresh Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and integrate all internal systems into a single platform (accounting, events, e-communications).
- Invest in new team collaboration technologies.
- Expand the use of video and e-learning platforms across all member-facing service areas.
- Review annually staff performance and development policies/systems to ensure that all team members have the opportunity to grow and achieve their goals. Measure adoption rates and outcomes of learning initiatives.



OUTCOMES

- ✓ More effective use of data to identify and respond to member needs
- ✓ Higher levels of member satisfaction
- ✓ Higher levels of productivity across administrative functions.
- ✓ Increased levels collaboration and employee satisfaction.

OUR VALUES

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is guided by the following core values in advancing its vision and mission, and in the treatment of our people, members and stakeholders:

1. Non-Partisan & Principled
2. Member-Driven
3. Entrepreneurial
4. Inclusive, Collaborative and Respectful
5. Fiscally Responsible & Professionally Managed

