



## WHAT IS THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

As the name “Chamber of Commerce” implies, this organization is an assembly of those who are involved with and have an interest in business and free enterprise. It is a **private**, not-for-profit **business association**.

Most chambers of commerce are incorporated and have a 501(c)(6) “business association” tax exempt classification under the Internal Revenue Code – unlike most not-for-profit community organizations that are considered charitable, educational, religious, etc., with a 501(c)(3) or other classification.

Progressive and effective chambers of commerce are organized, funded, directed & operated by -- and are accountable only to -- its private business investors (members).

They recognize and resist the temptation of being “all things to everyone” -- the community’s “go to” organization – and are driven by mission statements that unequivocally and unambiguously seek to:

1. *Provide and support opportunities for business owners to increase their ROI (return on investment), and,*
2. *Create an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and private-sector risk taking – starting and growing businesses.*

Their short-range and long-term business plans, often referred to as “Program of Works”, are commonly centered on three mission-driven “product lines”:

1. Commercial Growth: Initiatives that support and stimulate commercial activity, workforce development, influx of investments, generation of goods and services, and local turn-over of capital.
2. Member-Investor Benefits: Unique value-added services (most often cost savings) are seen by the member-investors as a direct & tangible return on their annual investments;
3. Advocacy: Pro-actively representing the interest of businesses & free enterprise on public policy matters.

An effective business plan also includes the following “mission support” strategies:

1. Chamber & product Branding, Marketing & Communications, and
2. Resource Development, including money, tools, human & member-investor resources (time, know-how, materials, influence, etc.)

These chambers understand that their greatest contribution is one that no other organization is capable of providing...to foster a vibrant free enterprise environment that stimulates the creation of new jobs, rising wages and a growing tax base for their communities.

Communities with chambers of commerce that successfully can marshal their resources to achieve these results are communities that, with exemplary leadership, can truly meet their citizens’ quality of life expectations!