



Devils Lake Area Chamber of Commerce 5-Year Strategic Plan (2026–2030)

Mission Statement

Connecting business and community to grow stronger together.

Core Purpose

The Devils Lake Chamber is the driving force behind local business support—fueling innovation, strengthening partnerships, and building a thriving Lake Region.

Core Values

- *Have Passion*
- *Be Curious*
- *Work with Intention*
- *Lead With Purpose*

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Website & Communication
Collateral Material
Community Asset Banks
Presence in the Community
Membership Retention
Willingness to Expand into Areas of Need
ie: workforce
Our Own Company Workplace Culture
Support of Board of Directors & Community Leaders
Willingness to Help with Community Projects

Weaknesses

Board & Membership Involvement
Engagement in our Communication Channels
Community Perception of Our Role
Driven more towards community than business
Membership Dues Structure
Showcasing our Value

Opportunities

Membership Dues Structure
Yearly Membership Drop Ins with Staff & Board
Expand into Contracted Services
Sponsorship Brochure to Minimize Sponsor Asks
Civic Engagement Promotion & Development
Continuing Workforce strategies
Young Professional Engagement
Promote Idea of Hip/Fun Community Space
E-Commerce Education - removing technology barriers
501c3 Foundation (71% have them)

Threats

Sustainability of Local Business
E-commerce Online Sales
Staff Time & Resources
Families Relocating Out of the Community
Affordable Housing

Strategic Priorities

Priority #1 *Build for Impact*: Strengthening Systems, Staff & Strategy

Priority #2 *Elevate the Experience*: Strengthening Member Value & Connection

Priority #3 *Invest in Talent Attraction & Retention*: Growing People, Growing Devils Lake

Priority #4 *Strengthen the Civic Thread*: Connecting Business and Community

Priority #5 *Amplify Our Voice*: Branding, Storytelling & Strategic Reach

Priority #6 *Pave the Way*: Collaborating in Areas of Community Needs

Strategic Priorities & Objectives

1. Build for Impact: Strengthening Systems, Staff & Strategy

Goal: *Strengthen the financial health and operational resilience of the Chamber.*

Internal Strategic Vision: *The Chamber thrives when we're constantly improving—not just what we do, but how we do it. This priority focuses on tightening up our internal systems, building an engaged and aligned board, and creating the kind of operational agility that lets staff do great work without burnout or bottlenecks.*

External Strategic Vision: *The Chamber's external strategy centers on long-term sustainability, smarter member value, and a more visible, engaged presence in the community. Through strategic funding models, streamlined sponsorships, and purpose-driven programming, we're redefining what membership means—making it easier for businesses to see the return on their investment, and for the Chamber to stay focused on impact.*

Strategic Work Plan:

- Build a one sheet summary that Board members can use to promote successes to the community.
- Consider a modest, annual dues increase policy aligned with cost-of-living adjustments OR
- Launch a new *tiered* membership model to diversify dues and increase member investment.
- Establish a Chamber Foundation (501c3) to pursue grant funding, civic education, and workforce development initiatives.
- Evaluate all Chamber events with a “**Profit, Purpose, or Profile (boost our image)**” framework—keep only those that serve at least one of these goals.
- Introduce a multi-year sponsorship and visibility guide to streamline and boost sponsorship commitments and ease constant asks.
- Utilize CRM for membership database and communication & retention tracking.
- Increase membership revenue year over year.
- Increase member count year over year.
- Target member retention rate of 95%.

2. Elevate the Experience: Strengthening Member Value & Connection

Goal: *Build a stronger Chamber community by equipping members with tools for growth, expanding connection opportunities, and attracting new members.*

Strategic Vision: *This priority is about delivering more than a membership—it's about building a relationship. We're mapping the member journey from the first handshake to long-term impact, streamlining services, spotlighting success stories, and making sure every member feels seen, supported, and proud to belong.*

Strategic Work Plan:

- Offer workshops and information to members on effective practices to grow their business including AI and other targeted programs.
- Increase opportunities for members to market their businesses promoting the member-to-member, introductions, etc.
- Increase engagement with current and new members of the Chamber.
- Grow the Ambassador program with at least 7 highly motivated members.
- Grow the Community Captains program with at least 7 highly motivated members.

3. Invest in Talent Attraction and Retention: Growing People, Growing Devils Lake

Goal: *Play a lead role in navigating workforce challenges and connecting talent to opportunity.*

Strategic Vision: *Workforce challenges won't fix themselves—and the Chamber is stepping in with strategy, not just concern. This priority focuses on connecting talent to opportunity by building career pathways, strengthening business-school partnerships, and launching meaningful programming for young professionals that helps them grow and stay. We're not filling gaps alone, but we're making sure they don't get ignored.*

Strategic Work Plan:

- Build on the success of RWIP grants and expand youth engagement and job-shadow programs.
- Develop a long-term business-school liaison strategy, focusing on career exploration and work-based learning.
- Create a robust Young Professionals group or program that includes leadership development and community integration. *(Such as InternGF or Leadership Programs)*
- Explore and implement opportunities for young professionals and LRSC students within the community.

4. Strengthen the Civic Thread: Connecting Business and Community

Goal: *Become the leading convener of ideas and issues in the Devils Lake region.*

Strategic Vision: *The Chamber is stepping into its role as the community's unifying thread —where business, government, and citizens come together to learn, listen, and lead. This priority is about building bridges without taking sides, educating tomorrow's civic leaders, and creating space for real conversations on the issues that shape Devils Lake. Whether its board members checking in with local businesses or hosting legislative roundtables, we're here to convene—not divide.*

Strategic Work Plan:

- Position the Chamber as the “sensible middle” on key policy issues, maintaining nonpartisan, pro-community values.
- Develop a Civic Engagement Toolkit to educate employers and potential civic leaders on serving in local government.
- Host a Civic Engagement Roundtable Day and invite community into ask questions of city/county board members about serving the community.
- Host legislative sessions for the business community.
- Launch a “Board Ambassadors” program where board members conduct intentional, in-person check-ins with 10-15 businesses annually.

5. Amplify Our Voice: Branding, Storytelling & Strategic Reach

Goal: *Improve outreach, relevance, and perceived value of the Chamber to both members and the community.*

Strategic Vision: *We’re elevating how we communicate—not just louder, but clearer. This priority is about targeted outreach, refreshed branding, and a content strategy that reflects the full diversity of our membership and the impact of our work.*

- *Increase the Chamber’s marketing program by first benchmarking metrics and then by increasing engagement via newsletters, website, socials and print*
- *Use the 100-year anniversary to aggressively promote the Chamber looking back and looking forward*
- *Launch storytelling campaigns using Chamber members’ stories and testimonials via newsletters, website and social*
- *Promote the Lake Region as thriving, good for business and ready to grow*

Strategic Work Plan:

- Redesign the Chamber's communication strategy to segment audiences and deliver high-impact, measurable content.
- Implement marketing cooperative opportunities with member partners
- Launch new member automation emails to welcome as new members and showcase partnership opportunities
- Increase video storytelling (member spotlights, impact snapshots, behind-the-scenes)
- Review and update the Chamber’s website as needed.
- Create a communication’s calendar to better engage members and internally stay on task.
- Launch a member feedback loop annually (via surveys or visits) to align programs with real business needs.
- Continue growing presence on LinkedIn to target professional audiences and employer engagement.
- Utilize the new Workforce brand and content to market the community as a great place to work.
- Partner with Forward Devils Lake to support the Lake Region as an opportunity to do business.

6. Pave the Way: Collaborating in Areas of Community Need

Goal: *Be a good partner in areas of community needs.*

Strategic Vision: *Quality of life is economic development. This positions the Chamber as a collaborator in housing, infrastructure, and mobility solutions—connecting the dots between community needs and the partners who can meet them.*

Strategic Work Plan:

- Encourage a housing solutions roundtable to align with upcoming state grant opportunities and advocate for mixed-use, affordable development.
- Support the creation of activities to enhance quality of life, talent retention and talent attraction.
- Help explore co-location of services (Chamber, Tourism, Forward DL) to maximize collaboration and community visibility.
- Advocate for public transportation solutions and ride-share infrastructure to support workforce mobility and community livability.