



**Organization Overview
2023-2024**

Events & Promotions

Chamber Bucks Program

Finalized: April 15, 2024

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Ely.org**



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Introduction

July 2024, marks the 116th anniversary for the Ely Chamber of Commerce. The journey has included three name changes, plus shifts in focus based on area business needs. Across the decades, the Ely Chamber of Commerce has served as both a business association representing area businesses and as a visitor and information center.

The Ely area is fortunate to have a diverse economic base, which allows the business community to grow and expand. Major industries include health care, tourism-hospitality, government agencies, resource extraction, manufacturing, construction, retail, and services. A diverse economic base creates a cushion if one industry experiences a down turn, and conversely up turns in any industry has a positive ripple effect across our business community.

As a business community, there is a reliance on fellow businesses to provide goods and services to meet needs. Shopping local and supporting local is key to maintaining and developing a sustaining business community.

Why Join a Chamber of Commerce?

Each chamber of commerce operates differently. Approximately, 1/3 of U.S. chambers also serve as the area's visitor center or bureau. In smaller communities, the joint chamber-visitor center is beneficial for keeping staffing and operational costs low.

Businesses that join chamber of commerce's have increased exposure through joint marketing and advertising, experience a stronger support system through business networking, and membership increases a business's credibility. American Business Magazine noted customers are 63% more likely to purchase from a chamber member business and 44% of those surveyed felt businesses were more reputable belonging to a chamber.

There are common points across most chambers, which includes:

- Creating a business network
- Offering business supports for growth and new investments
- Marketing area businesses
- Representing the business community
- Promoting the community

Here's what the Ely Chamber of Commerce does:

- Creates business networking opportunities through their quarterly networking breakfasts, annual networking dinner, and business trainings and seminars.
- Offers resources for business growth and investment including its workforce toolkit, Northwoods Business Incubator, new business/owner resource packet, job fairs, job lists, and online job board.
- Markets area businesses through the Ely.org website, Ely Business & Visitor Guide, business promotions, advertising, and the visitor center.



- Represents the business community at its events, promotions, and physical location, plus at events and activities provided through other agencies, industries, and organizations.
- Promotes the Ely area as a place to Live.Work.Play. through its visitor center, activities, and community support.

So, why join the Ely Chamber of Commerce? The benefits of the Ely Chamber of Commerce's annual membership include networking, support, resources, advertising, and promotion.

2023-2024 Board of Directors

Dave Sebesta, Williams & Hall Outfitters, President/Chair, 218-365-5837

George Pond, Timber Trail Lodge, 1st Vice President, 218-365-4879

Jodi Martin, Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital, 2nd Vice President, 218-365-8739

Dafne Caruso, The Art Corner, Secretary, 218-365-2263

Kris Winkelman, Arrowhead Outdoors, Treasurer, 218-365-5358

Tanner Spicer, Voyageur North Outfitters, Director, 218-365-3251

Nicholas Mathiowetz, NorthRidge Community Credit Union, Director, 218-365-6947

Chamber Staff

Eva Sebesta, Executive Director, director@ely.org or 218-365-6123

Kristen Switajewski, Office Manager-Festival Coordinator, fun@ely.org

Lori Boes, Information Receptionist, info@ely.org

Strategic Planning Goals

The Ely Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors finalized its strategic plan during their March 2024 board meeting.

2024 – 2025 Strategic Plan Goals include:

- Develop a formal feedback process for members, nonmembers, and visitors
 - Create QR Code, webpage, and survey
 - QR Codes and webpage links provided in all Chamber newsletters and mailings
 - Place Feedback survey information in visitor center for residents and visitors to use
- Increase membership in Ely, Babbitt, Winton, and surrounding areas
 - Increased presence of executive director in business community
 - Connect with new businesses and owners and share business resource package
- Continue to draw distinctions between the Chamber and Ely Area Tourism Bureau
- Increase visibility in community through area events & promotions
 - Use our events and promotions to share Chamber news
 - Annual Chamber Overview on Ely.org website
 - Tuesday Group & Rotary talks
 - Participate in round table discussions
- Seek grants for building improvements and other activities
- Collect area economic data using University of Minnesota – Extension Services
- Continue to track event and promotion value



- Create a Chamber Scorecard
 - Chamber staff currently track visitors, phone calls, and referrals
 - Website analytics are shared in the Chamber’s annual overview
 - Social media analytics are shared with the Event & Promotions Committee that oversees our events
 - Monthly website analytics are reviewed by the board of directors
- Develop a formalized employee awards and recognition program for Chamber staff
- Organize industry-based events for Business Incubator sessions. Sessions may focus on training, funding, or resources.
- Continue staff development and create a staff succession plan
- Create a deeper collaboration with ECR, area high schools, Minnesota North College - Vermilion campus, and NorthForce for job fairs and workforce development.
- Attend Childcare Committee meetings and share information with the board of directors.
- Review the composition of the Chamber Board
- Develop an Ely.org business listing guide for making updates by businesses
- Develop a Member Value survey to identify needs of our members
 - Based on responses, develop programs to provide business development supports for members
 - Launch new program in 2025
- Create a Business Spotlight advertising plan
 - Develop plan & budget
 - Launch Business Spotlight in May 2025

Economic Impact of Chamber Events

The Ely Chamber of Commerce holds three major events; the Blueberry Art Festival in late July, the Harvest Moon Festival in early September, and the WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race in late February. Each event draws event participants from across the country and Canada, plus event enthusiasts from across the state and surrounding locations.

Our surveys have two components. The first targets the event and asks for feedback on how we can improve it. The second part asks specific economic based questions about the money spent on retail, restaurant, services, and lodging. In 2023, we surveyed both the Blueberry Art and Harvest Moon Festival vendors. The economic impact from each group is as follows:

| <u>Blueberry Art Festival Vendors</u> | Vendor Average | All Vendors |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Retail, restaurants & services | \$331.38 | \$64,287.00 |
| Lodging | \$364.52 | \$70,716.00 |
| Totals | \$695.90 | \$135,003.00 |

| <u>Harvest Moon Festival Vendors</u> | Vendor Average | All Vendors |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Retail, restaurants & services | \$184.38 | \$17,885.00 |
| Lodging | \$255.29 | \$24,762.00 |
| Totals | \$439.67 | \$42,647.00 |



A couple of differences were noted between the festivals. Harvest Moon is about half the size of the Blueberry Art Festival, so there are fewer vendors. Many of the Harvest Moon vendors are local artists, so they do not require lodging, meals, or additional services.

Blueberry Art Festival vendors tend to stay at motels, resorts, and vacation home rentals during the festival, so they are paying a higher rate per night.

We will continue to offer the surveys annually. We will also do the survey for our 2025 WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race. We feel the economic impact portion of the surveys help us to confidently continue offering these large events.

Expanding Business Promotion

Ely Chamber of Commerce members receive a variety of marketing and promotional perks, including:

- Referrals through the Chamber office
- Brochures or business card distribution through our visitor center
- Ely.org premier business listing
- A free basic listing in the annual business & visitor guide
- A listing in our annual membership role released in June
- Social media shares

An area the Chamber expanded on was social media promotion. In November we launched a focused Shop Local campaign designed to draw attention to area businesses before the holiday shopping season started. Wherever possible, we linked social media pages or websites directly to businesses. Each post had a theme, for example purchasing memberships to local clubs or organizations, outdoor clothing stores, tools, art, and other products and services. The promotion ran from early November through the end of December. Starting in January, we focused on lodging and outfitting, plus major area events. We followed up with a similar promotion several weeks before Valentine's Day.

Prior to the start of the holiday Shop Local promotion, we sent out information to area businesses and included our advertising partners and when we were running ads, so businesses could run their own ads during our promotions.

Shop Local-Ely

Our Shop Local-Ely has evolved from a large coupon book, to a coupon card, to a hybrid, and now a map. The original coupon book had a number of great offers; however, few coupons were actually used. The Events & Promotions Committee reviewed a few ideas and decided to move forward with an eco-friendlier option – the coupon card. Then the pandemic hit and businesses were challenged with supply issues. We shifted to a coupon list that was between 1-2 pages long depending on the time of year. Business participation has remained low, so we are modifying the program again.



We created a storefront business map of Ely several years ago that included public restrooms, parks, attractions, and 2-hour parking on the front. On the back was a list of businesses by street. This option has worked well for visitors and residents that needed just a map.

We are adjusting the map to include murals and other points of interest. For businesses that are offering specials, sales, or other discounts, they will have a shopping symbol next to their name. Customers can stop by and check out the current offers, which can change weekly, if desired by the business. As we move forward with the map, we will evaluate how well it works and if businesses feel returning to the coupons or coupon card is beneficial.

A second component of Shop Local-Ely is encouraging area businesses to make their purchases locally too. For every dollar we can keep in our business community, we support our businesses, their employees, and keep important goods and services right here. Some businesses do offer bulk purchase and business discounts. We encourage businesses to share their offers with the Ely Chamber of Commerce, which can be a part of our Business-to-Business support.

Event Calendar and Social Media Working Together

Ely.org hosts the area's event calendar featuring community activities ranging from large events, craft shows, musicals, special events, sports, and more. Lori Boes is our event calendar specialist. She searches social media and the internet for area activities and events that are added to our calendar weekly.

Kristen Switajewski does our social media posts for our events and Chamber pages. Twice a week, she does social media posts on our Ely MN Events Facebook page highlighting activities happening during the week and on weekends.

Our event calendar and social media posts serve two purposes. First, they highlight community activities and events that support our way of life. We have so many amazing clubs and organizations that work hard to provide opportunities for our residents. Secondly, those who live out of town can plan their visit around calendar and social media posts – either for the day or while on vacation. As people are enjoying the various activities and events, they are also apt to shop, dine, and use services.

The Ely Chamber of Commerce recognizes the value of community and its importance to supporting our way of life.

Ely.Org Website

Ely.org continues to offer businesses a powerful marketing tool. The following information is based on a 12-month period. Businesses may find the information valuable for planning marketing and advertising. Information such as browser and platform can provide insight on website layout and formatting.

Data on next page.



Acquisition statistics:

- General overview
 - User total 179,118
 - Sessions 290,617
 - Event count 3,186,380
 - Events per session 10.96
 - Engagement rate 71.03%
- Users by Landing Page:
 - Webcams 9.5%
 - Blueberry Art Festival 8.1%
 - Things to Do 7.9%
 - Lodging 5.9%
 - Harvest Moon Festival 2.5%
 - Fishing Report 2.4%
 - Vacation Planning 2.3%
 - Events Calendar 2.3%
 - Hiking 1.9%
 - Campgrounds 1.7%
 - BWCAW Rules & Regs 1.6%
 - BWCAW 1.6%
 - ATV 1.2%
 - Restaurants 1.2%
 - Outfitters 1.1%
 - Shopping 1.2%

Demographic statistics:

- Users by country
 - United States 94.9% of total
 - Canada 0.84%
 - United Kingdom 0.44%
 - Germany 0.35%
- Users by City (% of US users)
 - Chicago 13.3% of total
 - Minneapolis 9.8%
 - Dallas 3.0%
 - Ely 2.7%
 - Duluth 1.6%
 - Saint Paul 1.3%
 - Ashburn 0.9%

Users by State (% of US users)

- Minnesota 33.8% of total
- Illinois 17.5%
- Texas 8.7%
- Wisconsin 5.2%
- Iowa 4.1%
- Missouri 3.8%
- Oklahoma 2.3%
- Kansas 2.3%

Technology statistics:

- Users by Operating System:
 - iOS 44.7% of total
 - Android 20.1%
 - Windows 20.1%
 - Macintosh 12.3%
 - Linux 1.3%
 - Chrome 1.0%
- Users by Browser:
 - Safari 45.7% of total
 - Chrome 41.1%
 - Edge 4.7%
 - Safari (in-app) 2.5%
 - Firefox 2.3%

Users by Platform:

- Mobile device 61.4%
- Desktop 35.1%
- Tablet 3.1%

Search statistics:

- Organic search 68.5% of total
- Direct search 15.0%
- Paid search 7.6%
- Organic Social 3.8%
- Referrals 2.7%
- Display 1.0%
- Email links 0.7%



Chamber Business Newsletter

Timing is everything. Our monthly Chamber newsletter is now reaching business inboxes between the 15-18th each month. The newsletter has specific topics focusing on Chamber activities, new businesses and owners, area events and promotions, funding opportunities, and training options.

When the newsletter started in March 2012, we had an open rate of 34.2%, 10 years later we had an open rate of 43.5%, and our latest newsletters have had an open rate of 50.9%. Thank you for supporting the Chamber newsletter. We encourage businesses to share information, accomplishments, and news. Businesses can also provide business-to-business offers. Contact Chamber staff with your details.

2023-2024 Focus: Workforce & Business Development

Continuing our efforts started in 2021, Chamber staff have expanded ways for businesses to connect with potential employees.

1. Ely Chamber of Commerce members have the opportunity to list job openings on our website at Ely.org. Our Employment page received over 1350 views, followed by our Relocation page with over 150.
2. Development of a Workforce Resource packet containing internship opportunities through Midwest colleges and universities and the USA Bridge program, along with state and regional resources.
3. Two job fairs targeting three different demographics with the opportunity for all businesses to submit job openings for a combined job list handed out at the job fairs and at the Chamber office.
 - a. A job fair was hosted by the Ely High School as a joint event with Northeast Range School. The Chamber and fifteen area businesses participated. The Chamber will continue to partner with the area schools.
 - b. The Ely Job Fair hosted at the Ely Area Senior Center was open to high school, college, and residents. The Chamber and fourteen area businesses.
4. We changed the format of the Northwoods Business Incubator sessions and allowed area businesses to provide informational sessions. We have a very talented group of business owners and felt they could share tips on a variety of topics. These were our winter sessions:
 - a. Business Succession 101, Nick Dunnom
 - b. Business Succession 201, Nick Dunnom

Quarterly Chamber Business Breakfasts

The Chamber's quarterly business breakfasts allow business owners and managers the chance to gather, share their news, and learn about initiatives happening within the business community. During the past year, participants have engaged in lively discussions and invited each other to share insights. No news to share? Come and learn about business community initiatives, business concerns, etc. There is always room for more at the table. Our quarterly meetings are in March, June, September, and December.



Celebrate Ely Business Networking Dinner

Celebrate Ely Business Networking dinner was held on April 11, 2024, at the Grand Ely Lodge. This year's theme was "Wildlife Safari" and featured Steve Fredlund, "The Safari Guy." The Celebrate Ely event includes the Jackpine Bob Cary Community Spirit, Good Neighbor Business, Excellence in Customer Service, and Good Citizen Volunteer awards, Ely Chamber of Commerce overview, door prizes, social hour with fun activities, buffet dinner, and keynote speaker.

Celebrate Ely offers owners, employees, and interested residents the opportunity to gather for a fun evening of networking and celebrating our amazing community.

Video Promotion Project

The Ely Chamber of Commerce teamed up with Mike Fitzgerald from Wolvenwood Studios and Chris Ellerbroek from Ten80North to create a unique opportunity for Chamber members. Mike and Chris work with business owners to create a unique 2-minute video. The video is hosted on the Chamber's YouTube channel and can be linked to the business listing at Ely.org, or other websites or social media accounts. The cost of the video is \$700.00. The business pays for \$250.00 and the Chamber covers the remaining amount. There is a limit of twelve openings per year. Chris and Mike finished working on the second round of videos, so the waiting list for 2024 has started.

AED Grant Program

For two years, the Ely Chamber of Commerce has partnered with the Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital to assist area businesses and organizations with AED (automated external defibrillator) purchases. The Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital Foundation has generously provided a total of \$3500.00 in grants. To participate in the grant program a business purchases the AED of their choice, submits the invoice to the Chamber, and receives reimbursement up to \$500.00 towards the purchase.

In 2022, three businesses participated in the AED program, one business in 2023, and two in 2024. Interested businesses can contact the Chamber office to confirm funding availability.

Supporting Local Organizations

The Ely Chamber of Commerce provides letters of support to a variety of organizations seeking to expand services, purchase equipment, improve facilities, or enhance experiences. During the 2023-2024 membership year, we have provided letters of support to the following organizations:

- Prospector Loop
- Ely ArtWalk
- International Wolf Center – 2 letters
- Ely Nordic Club
- Ely Igloo Snowmobile Club
- City of Ely
- Dorothy Molter Memorial Museum
- Ely's Historic State Theater – 2 letters



We feel these organizations provide important services, recreational opportunities, or attractions for both residents and visitors. We also provide letters of support for area for-profit businesses.

Ely Economic Development Authority (EEDA)

The Ely Chamber of Commerce joined the EEDA in July 2021 to share its work with the EEDA. With many entities in the Ely area working on different aspects of workforce needs, sharing information is critical. The City of Ely, through the EEDA, has provided a great deal of support for our work. The monthly meetings provide us the opportunity to share our work and efforts with interested businesses and individuals beyond our Chamber membership.

Looking to the Future

The Ely area is beyond surviving – it is thriving. Each year we see new investors either purchasing existing businesses or starting new ones. The Ely Chamber of Commerce is positioned to continue providing valuable marketing, resources, and supports to its members, while also supporting the business community. We are listening to the needs of the business community and adjusting our services and supports accordingly. We live in a fast-paced world, so there is no time to wait for change.

2024-2025 Events & Promotions

We are currently reviewing our annual promotions using a Business Promotion Survey. The survey runs through April 30, 2024. Once we receive feedback from the business community the dates and details of some promotions may change. We will update the business community accordingly.

May 18, 2024

Citywide Rummage, Business Crazy Day, and Used Equipment & Watercraft Sale

Chamber member businesses receive a free listing and window sign. We create an event map with locations for in-town businesses and rummage sales. Those businesses outside of town have directions to their location. The Citywide Rummage Sale is for residents and nonprofit organizations, such as churches. The Business Crazy Day is for store front retail businesses. The Used Equipment & Watercraft is designed for area outfitters and resorts. The combined event is designed to attract individuals from across the Iron Range and as far south as the Twin Cities to head north and take advantage of great sales. For businesses, it's a wonderful time to move last year's merchandise, used camping gear and watercraft, or other items. Sign-up begins in late April and closes 10 days prior to the event start.

July 25-28, 2024

Operation Blueberry (Business Shopping)

We launched Operation Blueberry during 2020 during the time the Blueberry/Art Festival would have occurred. It was a smashing success and businesses asked us to continue to offer the shopping event. Businesses are asked to create something blueberry. Some offered homemade blueberry popsicles, others pick-a-blueberry discount, still others offered all blue-colored items at a discount. There are no rules



other than creating a fantastic window display or large banner for your storefront. We provide a map and business listing for all participating businesses.

July 26-28, 2024

Blueberry/Art Festival

The art & craft applications opened on January 1. We are well on our way to filling the event with art, craft, and food vendors. This event has a capacity for 260 vendors and fills Whiteside Park from end to end. Set-up for the festival starts the week before with us marking the park on Monday and physical set up of booths on Thursday.

NOTE: We do have sponsor opportunities for businesses. If interested, contact us for details.

Experience Ely Expo

We are excited to offer the expo, which is a way for nonprofit organizations to participate in Whiteside Park during the Blueberry/Art Festival. In the past, we had 14 nonprofits within the festival. Now there are 20 booth spaces available and the opportunity for new nonprofits to participate. The categories are art & craft organization or event, sports & recreation organization or event, museum or attraction, first responders, and service organizations. The application period opened on January 1. The Expo application period closes on April 15.

September 5-8, 2024 **Harvest Days (Business Shopping)**

Harvest Days originated in 2020 as we searched for ways to encourage shoppers to head to Ely. This event is a great opportunity to offer sales, clearance, or other incentives to draw shoppers through your door. How can you boost your bottom line in September? Consider making Harvest Days a shopping event for your store. We provide a map and business listing for each participating business.

September 6-8, 2024 **Harvest Moon Festival**

Applications for this fall event opened on January 1 and just like the Blueberry/Art Festival, it is filling quickly. This fall festival takes a slightly different direction – a more laid-back and relaxed feel compared to our bustling July event. We typically have 120 to 140 art, craft, and food vendors for this 3-day event. Set-up for the festival begins the week before as we mark the park on Tuesday, and the physical booth set up begins early Thursday morning.

NOTE: We do have sponsor opportunities for businesses. If interested, contact us for details.



Experience Ely Expo

We do offer a second expo during the Harvest Moon Festival weekend. This event has the same criteria and space availability as the expo held during the Blueberry/Art Festival. Applications for this expo also opened on January 1 and close on April 15.

November 30, 2024

Shop Local Saturday

The nationwide Shop Local promotion is set for November 30. We start our social media Shop Local Business Blast in early November and it will continue through the holidays. Let us know if you have specials or promotions we can share.

December 14, 2024

Ely Christmas

We are combining our Shine Bright, Smalltown Christmas and Mrs. Claus Party into one weekend. The date change offers businesses the opportunity to decorate their stores and enjoy a weekend long shopping event before the holidays.

Shine Bright Ely

Lights are a beautiful way to brighten any store front and lead shoppers through your door. We had some phenomenal light displays and a mini-Ely train display that was absolutely amazing in 2020. The bar is set – how can you outshine your neighboring businesses in 2024? Prizes are awarded for the top three displays. We will provide a map of all the participating business locations.

Smalltown Christmas - Shop Local Weekend

Smalltown Christmas is Ely's kickoff to the holiday shopping season. Each participating business will receive a listing on our event flyer along with any featured products, sales, or discounts.

Mrs. Claus Party

Plan for 160 participants. Whatever happens after that is totally unanticipated and filled with extreme fun. Mrs. Claus welcomes all the area youth as they attend a morning filled with crafts and fun activities. Santa always makes an appearance and listens to each child's holiday wishes. Each child goes home with handmade craft projects they create and a goodie bag filled with treats, small gifts and other items.

NOTE: We gladly accept small gifts, cash donations, candy, and other items from area businesses and organizations. We provide a sponsor/donor list in each gift bag so the families know which businesses are supporting the party.



January 10-11, 2025 Ely Dark Sky Festival

Our first Dark Sky festival is a community effort with businesses, organizations, and attractions coming together to celebrate our Dark Sky designation. The event is in its development phase with more details to follow.

February 21-23, 2025 WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race Weekend

Up to 60 sled dog teams travel to Ely to compete in our one-day race.

Prerace activities include the WolfTrack Prance on Friday night. On Saturday, the Chamber hosts a Meet the Teams at Minnesota North College – Vermilion Campus. The Vermilion Campus Wilderness Club hosts a Musher Dinner in the college cafeteria. Several hundred people enjoy the all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner. During both Saturday events, the public has the opportunity to meet and visit with mushers.

Following the Musher Dinner, all of the mushers and their handlers head to the college theater where the Race Director, Race Marshal, and Trail Boss discuss race rules, the trail, and racing conditions.

The race kicks off at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning as the first 8-dog team hits the trail. Once all 8-dog teams are on the trail, then the 6-dog teams follow. Our 8-dog teams travel 50 miles along the Taconite Trail and come across Bear Head Lake, heading back to the Ely finish line. Our 6-dog teams also travel along the Taconite Trail and head over to the Purvis Lake area before heading back to Ely – covering about 30 miles on their journey.

NOTE: Sponsorships are available for this event.

We invite you to participate in our Chamber sponsored events. For more details, please contact the Chamber office at 218-365-6123 or director@ely.org.



APPENDIX A

Chamber Bucks Program

Several decades ago, the Ely Chamber of Commerce started a promotion they used at sport & travel shows across the Midwest. Visitors were presented with a card redeemable for Chamber Bucks. They would bring the card into the Chamber office and receive their Chamber Bucks, that could be redeemed at various Ely businesses. As time went on, the program caught on locally and businesses began to buy Chamber Bucks for their guests and staff. Of course, residents thought it was a snappy idea too, so they became a popular way to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and holidays. The one-size-fits-all concept allowed the receiver to use the Chamber Bucks at dozens of area businesses.

The Chamber Buck program is exclusive to Chamber members. We offer increments of \$5, \$10, and \$20 Chamber Bucks. We keep a list of participating businesses and provide the list with each Chamber Buck purchase. When businesses receive the Chamber Bucks, they treat them just like regular cash. Businesses bring their Chamber Bucks back to our office, and we issue a check for the full-face value of each Chamber Buck returned. Businesses can bring them in person or send by mail.

For example, a customer makes a purchase for \$7.50 and provides a \$20.00 Chamber Buck. The cashier must provide \$12.50 in change or issue an in-store credit for that amount. Collect the Chamber Buck after the transaction as it is no longer valid. The business must return the original Chamber Buck to us either in person or by mail to be reimbursed.



APPENDIX B

Strategic Planning Overview

2022 marked the second round of strategic planning for the Ely Chamber of Commerce. The first round of strategic planning started in 2018 with focus groups and was completed in October 2019 as board members reviewed feedback received from members and nonmembers. This fall, board members reviewed the original parts of the strategic planning to determine successes and work remaining. The following items are the outcomes from the 2022 strategic planning.

Vision: Leading a thriving, sustainable economic community.

Mission: The Ely Chamber of Commerce's emphasis is on leadership and advocacy, strategic partnerships, career development of its citizens, business diversity, and education.

Work & Actions Prioritized by: Local, Inclusivity, Relationships, Leadership, Workforce Development, and Growth

Stakeholders: Members, Industries, Strategic Partners, The Board, Volunteers, and Employees

The Next 6 Bold Steps Towards the Future Include:

- Develop/execute a comprehensive communications plan that reaches all members, non-members and the community.
- Identify & prioritize the most fiscally responsible avenues for the Chamber.
- Introduce a Member Brand & Marketing Plan benefit that facilitates growth and expansion.
- Introduce Chamber Success Dashboard to track compelling progress metrics.
- Invest in professional development & succession planning of Chamber staff.
- Advance viable employment initiatives available through agencies and government programs.

As we continue our work, we will base our decisions on how efforts compliment and support our strategic planning and the needs of our members.



APPENDIX C

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) For Chamber Members

Revised 04/05/2023

The purpose of this document is to answer the most asked questions of our membership. Our goal is to clearly articulate the value of Chamber membership and increase member involvement & engagement through consistent messaging and opportunities. Please let us know if you have any additional questions by contacting us via email or phone at Director@ely.org or 218-365-6123.

1. **Why should I join/maintain a Chamber membership?** As a Chamber member, you can develop yourself through networking, education and advocacy and directly impact the success of the business community. Full membership enables you to vote on the direction of business and economic development opportunities, participate in those opportunities, enjoy business referrals and advertising opportunities, receive aggregate news and much more.
2. **What are the expectations of me as a member?** We encourage you to share your voice and fully leverage the membership benefits highlighted in question eleven below. Our most engaged members are those who show a passion for the advancement of the Ely business and economic community as modeled by the following:
 - **Voice:** Serve on a committee and/or the board, vote whenever asked and/or, simply share your perspective about an opportunity for you or the Chamber to make a difference. Demonstrate a positive leadership shadow by educating others about Chamber decisions, operations, and events.
 - **Participate:** Take advantage of the member and economic development opportunities.
 - **Endorse/Invest:** Get behind the decisions of the Chamber by actively endorsing Chamber sponsored member and economic development opportunities and/or the three seasonal festivals. Educate your staff about Chamber sponsored events; their lack of awareness of an event reflects your engagement and detracts visitor participation/awareness. Help make Ely events more inviting by acknowledging the activity(ies) and/or asking customers about their awareness regardless of your participation in the event(s).
3. **What can I expect from other Chamber members?** Openness to share best practices and networking, offer promotional savings for your business, referrals, and participation in business celebrations such as new business ribbon cutting and anniversaries. In addition, you can expect other members to demonstrate a positive leadership shadow and an active voice in Chamber/business news.
4. **Why is the Chamber responsible for the visitor's center?** The Ely Chamber of Commerce has long served as both a Chamber and Visitor Center. This is an approach that has been adopted by approximately 1/3 of Chambers across the United States. Combining these functions enables us to



connect people with products and services. We serve as an information hub, which supports the Ely ecosystem—all businesses, residents, and visitors. Providing information through one location is both efficient and fiscally responsible for a community of our size.

5. **How is the Chamber funded?** The Chamber is funded through its membership dues and funds raised through the three Chamber sponsored events (WolfTrack Classic, Blueberry Fest and Harvest Moon festival). Lodging, Forest Service, City, or other tax dollars are not used to operate or pay staff.
6. **What do the membership dues support?** The membership dues support the following: a combined Chamber of Commerce and visitor/information center, building operation/maintenance, three full time salary equivalents (FTE), business development workshops, Ely.org, and social media pages, resources for new businesses including ribbon cutting ceremonies, facilitation of business ideas and networking events/promotions that support businesses and the greater Ely area community, including the three seasonal events (WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race, Blueberry Art Festival and Harvest Moon Festival) and a number of smaller activities geared toward driving retail traffic (see question 16).
7. **What is the relationship between the Tourism Bureau and the Chamber?** As of 2019, the Ely Area Tourism Bureau and Chamber of Commerce are separate entities, with separate boards and no shared funds.
8. **Does the Tourism Bureau contribute to the Visitor/Information Center budget?** The Ely Tourism Bureau does not contribute funding for the operation or staffing of the Chamber or visitor/information center. They are a separate organization that manages area lodging tax dollars.
9. **May I join a Chamber board meeting?** All members are invited to attend meetings—if you are interested in doing so, simply contact Eva Sebesta, Executive Director at Director@ely.org. The board does reserve the right to excuse members in attendance if sensitive topics will be discussed and/or voted on. Also, know that minutes are distributed following every board meeting via email.
10. **How can I get more involved in the Chamber?** Call us at 218-365-6123 to discuss your interests—we'd love to have you join us! There's always an opportunity to share your voice and/or passion, e.g., serve on a committee, event, or board, help us welcome and onboard new businesses, sponsor an event, etc.
11. **What does my membership include?** There are three different types of memberships: Full, Associate and Sponsoring. Full and Associate membership is available to any Ely business while non-Ely businesses in surrounding areas are invited to join as a Sponsoring member.



Full membership includes the following privileges:

- **Voice.** Vote on board members, Chamber By-laws and Articles of Incorporation as well as some of the potential direction of Chamber business and economic development opportunities, e.g., educational series, direction of Northwoods Medallion Hunt.
- **Promotion.** Enjoy business referrals from the Chamber, visibility on Ely.org and public events, inclusion in visitor center brochure/flier display as well as the opportunity to participate in the Ely Chamber of Commerce coupon card, the Chamber Membership Directory and an advertising opportunity in the annual Ely Vacation Guide and social media interactions and promotions, and priority in event sponsorships.
- **News & Resources.** Receive relevant, triaged news and resources from a variety of government/county agencies, law enforcement and other entities in addition to Chamber and community news.
- **Personal Growth.** Enjoy access to leadership and networking opportunities, e.g., education, networking forums.
- **Economic Development.** Participate and/or endorse Chamber sponsored opportunities that drive traffic and/or support new business, e.g., Ely Chamber Buck Certificate program, new business celebrations, business incubation.

Associate and Sponsoring members receive a website on Ely.org, an invitation to all Chamber opportunities, e.g., networking and workshops, a subscription to all Chamber member news correspondence and inclusion in the brochure/flier display at the Chamber visitor center.

12. **I see that Full membership includes the right to vote. What can I expect in this regard?** In addition to voting on board members, Chamber By-laws and Articles of Incorporation, we often ask for the member perspective on the direction of Chamber business and economic development opportunities.
13. **How does the Chamber advocate on my/local business(es) behalf?** We support and actively pursue federal, state, and local issues that may influence our area's business environment in partnership with State and Federal representatives, local officials, and area organizations. Examples include COVID-19 pandemic, economic development, small business development, workforce initiatives, and education.
14. **I understand that Chamber oversees the Blueberry/Art Festival, the Harvest Moon Festival, and the WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race. For what other consumer events is the Chamber responsible?** In addition to these three seasonal events, the Chamber's Events & Promotions Committee uses some of the funding generated from the three seasonal events to oversee some smaller initiatives geared at driving local traffic and sales. Most recent activities include the following and rely on Chamber member participation/endorsement: City Wide Rummage, Business Crazy Day and Used Gear & Watercraft Sale, Operation Blueberry, Harvest Days, Smalltown Christmas Shop Local, and Shine Bright Ely.