

THE BIG BOOK *of* CHAMBER IDEAS

9 AWARD-WINNING & REPLICABLE
IDEAS FOR CHAMBERS OF
COMMERCE

VOL. 6



**6TH ANNUAL
CHAMBER
INNOVATION
AWARD
COMPETITION**

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INTRODUCTION

The next time your chamber plans an event or program, you can hit the ground running with these winning program and event ideas from the 6th annual Chamber Innovation Awards Competition.

Over 100 chambers submitted exceptional ideas for events and programs. Entries were received from an array of chambers of all sizes from across the U.S. and Canada. Competition judges included Membership Pro Frank Kenny; Todd Shimkus, President of the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce; Betsy Gardner Eckbert, President/CEO of the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce; and ChamberMaster Senior Vice President of Marketing, John Cook. Entries were judged on creativity, industry impact, value to members, and replicability. The winning chamber was awarded the \$1,000 grand prize.

Additionally, there were three \$500 prizes awarded to the first-place winner in each of the following categories: Small Chamber, Medium Chamber, and Large Chamber.

The contest was highly competitive and resulted in Honorable Mention recognition of noteworthy programs.

Enjoy paging through these winning ideas, and we hope you find inspiration that helps your chamber make an impact.



6TH ANNUAL CHAMBER **INNOVATION** — AWARD — COMPETITION

GRAND PRIZE

IDEA:
"Chamber Signing Day"

CHAMBER:
Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:
Fort Smith, AR

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 1,100 | Employees: 8



A SPOTLIGHT ON STAYING LOCAL

Filling the workforce pipeline.

Every year, high school athletes across the country smile for the cameras with pen in hand and sign national letters of intent to play college sports. Colleges distribute press releases, high schools host ceremonies, athletes are interviewed, and sports pundits comment and analyze, all creating an overnight hometown legend.

Over 3 million students graduate from high school each year; 7% will play sports in college, and only 2% will compete at the Division 1 level.

Graduates who opt to enter the workforce, pursue higher education locally, or enroll in school part-time to serve in apprenticeships or internships are often overlooked.

The Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce saw an opportunity and partnered with the community, local businesses, the local college, and area school districts to host a signing day for high school and college students joining the regional workforce.

After two years of planning, months of applications and interviews, the event took place in conjunction with the Chamber's monthly First Friday Breakfast. The inaugural program had 40 students sign letters of intent, 31 of whom were able to attend the event, publicly committing to jobs, internships, and mentoring programs.

The program serves as part of an overall initiative to reinvigorate the local workforce – with a focus on healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT jobs. Filling the workforce pipeline creates jobs, adds dollars to the tax revenue base, increases interest in local employment opportunities, and contributes to attracting new companies to the area.

1ST PLACE LARGE CHAMBER

IDEA:
"2019 – The Year of Tech"

CHAMBER:
Greater Louisville Inc. - Metro
Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:
Louisville, KY

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 1700 | Employees: 35



[SEE IDEA](#)

LEVERAGING A TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM

Overcoming job disruption caused by automation.

The Greater Louisville Inc. - Metro Chamber of Commerce declared 2019 as The Year of Tech. With 1,300 tech companies, and as the area's fastest-growing job classification, the technology industry has become integral to the Louisville, Kentucky regional economy.

The Year of Tech initiative was launched to promote conversation about Louisville as an emerging tech hub. The goal of the initiative is to bring awareness, build consensus, and ultimately galvanize support for regional growth of the industry.

The Chamber promotes tech-related programs, events, and information under the name Tech City. They also commissioned a formal mapping of the region's tech companies to further economic development efforts.

Tech City events focus on technical innovation, professional skill education in the applied sciences, application development, blockchain, engineering, healthcare tech, information technology, and robotics.

Events that carry the Tech City stamp are cross-promoted on Greater Louisville Inc. – Metro Chamber of Commerce social media platforms and featured on GreaterLouisville.com. The Chamber also developed the Tech City toolkit to empower people to join the conversation and to drive attendance at Tech City-related events.

As a region facing job disruption as a result of automation, Louisville's Year of Tech program plays a critical role, helping to generate jobs and generate wealth in the area.

1ST PLACE MEDIUM CHAMBER

IDEA:
"Community Concierge"

CHAMBER:
Mason City Area Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:
Mason City, Iowa

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 660 | Employees: 5



[SEE IDEA](#)

CONCIERGE AT YOUR SERVICE

Helping area businesses recruit and retain talent.

Facing a critical workforce shortage, and current demographic trends painting a grim picture, the Mason City Area Chamber of Commerce is focused on meeting the challenge head-on.

Public relations and community marketing are at the heart of the Chamber's mission, and their vast network provides an opportunity to collaborate with businesses, schools, churches, and nonprofits to support the area's employee recruitment and retention efforts.

Enter the Community Concierge. The Chamber created the staff position to assist area businesses in the recruitment and retention of high-value employees, such as physicians, engineers, and executives. Uniquely qualified to provide personalized service by leveraging a collaborative approach, the concierge works to meet the personal needs of these highly skilled individuals.

The concierge's typical day may include sending a custom-tailored promo video to individual recruitment targets, providing community data for analysis of a compensation package, helping an incoming family arrange temporary housing, sourcing trailing spouse employment opportunities, following up with newly settled professionals, and everything in between.

With an aging workforce and below-average household income, the Chamber is intent on shifting the population trends and improving their community. Because, as they put it, "That's what we do!"

IDEA:
"Living Color Utah"

CHAMBER:
Utah Black Chamber

LOCATION:
Salt Lake City, Utah

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 200 | Employees: 0



TURNING A REQUEST INTO A VALUABLE RESOURCE

Local organizations team up to promote diversity.

Struggling to retain a diverse workforce, a large, Utah-based financial services company reached out to Salt Lake City for assistance. In turn, the City approached the Utah Black Chamber for suggestions. The Chamber initially proposed an online diversity guide be developed through the efforts of five chambers and a young professionals' group.

The Asian Chamber, Hispanic Chamber, LGBTQ+ Chamber, the SLC Pacific Island Business Alliance, Young Professionals of Salt Lake City, and the Black Chamber, with the Utah Cultural Trust serving as the admin, collaborated to make it happen.

Intent on serving as a resource for the people and companies of Utah, in 2018, the organizations established Living Color Utah, a single website that is populated by the groups' software data feeds, aggregating their directories, events, and job postings in one place. Utah Cultural trust runs the website, serves as the point of contact for the collective group, and manages the program's social media accounts.

Since its launch, the website has expanded, becoming "Utah's Employee Resource Group (ERG)" hub. Local and state governments, individuals, nonprofits, and companies of all sizes leverage the platform to promote

diversity, engage the workforce, and strengthen diversity initiatives.

The collective also collaborated with Utah Business Magazine to host the Living Color Gala, recognizing individuals and organizations who are fostering diversity initiatives in Utah.

The Living Color Utah organizations have also benefited from the program. They continue to strengthen their alliance through additional collaboration on events, ideas, and programs, which has increased their visibility and bolstered their roles in the community.

Living Color Utah has established itself as the premier program to connect, engage, recruit, and retain Utah's growing diverse community.

HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:
"Member Milestones"

CHAMBER:
Grande Prairie & District Chamber of
Commerce

LOCATION:
Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 1,300 | Employees: 6

**Chamber of
Commerce** 
GRANDE PRAIRIE & DISTRICT
Connecting Business. Creating Opportunity.

[SEE IDEA](#)

MEMBER VISITS WITH A PURPOSE

Maximizing member anniversaries.

A few years ago, the Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce had an "aha" moment. Like many chambers, their strategy had a heavy focus on recruiting new members, with minimal resources allocated for the retention of current members.

The decision was made to revamp their approach. The Member Milestones program was launched to improve retention by scheduling chamber staff to have individual, face-to-face interactions with members at their place of business.

Member visits are scheduled on or around significant member anniversaries. When a business reaches a membership milestone of 5, 10, 15, 20, or more years, the Chamber arranges a Milestone Visit with ambassadors, staff, and board members. They arrive with chamber swag and donuts and present a certificate honoring the member's commitment to the Chamber. Members that have reached quarter century or half century milestones receive a plaque.

The Chamber uses the celebration to promote the member (and the Chamber) on social media with photos of the visit. The board members, staff, and ambassadors benefit from the networking opportunity.

Chamber staff may take a tour or simply sit down to visit with the member business staff. They discuss what the Chamber could do to support the member, reiterate existing benefits to help the member maximize their membership, and touch on some of the Chamber's recent accomplishments that positively impact the community as a whole.

The Member Milestone program ensures the Chamber is "checking in" with all members at least every five years. It's an effective way to generate PR and improve retention rates.

HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:

“Yee-Haw, It’s a Ball Y’all”

CHAMBER:

Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:

Nashville, Tennessee

CHAMBER STATS:

Members: 355 | Employees: 2



[SEE IDEA](#)

A TV-THEMED GALA TO HONOR WOMEN

Transforming an event into something fresh.

Recognizing that women command a unique place in the business environment, the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce founded Women in Business (WIB) in 2007. Twelve years later, the program is still going strong, fulfilling its mission to provide an avenue for women to connect, celebrate, and support each other.

Recently, the Chamber tasked the WIB committee with replacing an existing chamber event, which had limited growth potential, with something fresh. The group took on the project and decided to develop something that would honor women, catch the attention of the public and the media, spotlight the chamber, and drive traffic to the Chamber’s website.

The result was “Yee-Haw, It’s a Ball Y’all.” Held at the Grand Ole Opry House, the gala was themed around the television show, Hee Haw.

Located in Studio A, the same place the television show Hee Haw was taped, the gala was headlined by three former Hee Haw cast members on the 50th anniversary of the first airing of the show. The event had a western motif highlighted by split-rail fences, a Nashville Hot Chicken Dinner, tables covered with sequins and burlap, and centerpieces made with cowboy boots and high heel shoes filled with daisies and sunflowers.

A presentation of the Influencing Women Awards was paired with the gala. It included six categories and honored nineteen women and three businesses. The winners were nominated by and voted on by the community through online polling. The voting drove people to the chamber website, and Google Analytics showed the nominating and voting process increased initial and return visits to the site.

A portion of the evening’s proceeds benefited Girls on the Run, an organization dedicated to inspiring young girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident. The Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce demonstrated that with some creativity and hard work, transforming an old event into something exciting and new is not only possible, but beneficial.

HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:
"First Louisiana Drone Investment Tour"

CHAMBER:
West Baton Rouge Chamber of
Commerce

LOCATION:
Addis, LA

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 350 | Employees: 3



**WEST BATON ROUGE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

SEE IDEA

AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TOUR WITH A TWIST

Demonstrating relevance via a drone tour.

Local investment and economic expansion often signify a positive trend for communities. Growth in GDP, the tax base, number of building permits, and opportunities for grants and funding typically go hand-in-hand with improvement to an area's quality of life.

In response to being identified as the number one investment city in Louisiana by a SmartAsset analysis, the West Baton Rouge Chamber set out to reiterate their area's relevance.

The Chamber organized an economic opportunity tour of the region for investors, parish officials, and chamber members. Attendees boarded chartered buses outfitted with video monitors and a speaker system.

While traveling through the area, an overhead drone provided a live feed, showcasing local properties and companies such as the Highway 415 Industrial Corridor, the Port of Greater Baton Rouge, the Rawlston Philips property, and the Thermalayne facility.

Supplementing the video feed, business owners and executives shared how the area has positively affected their companies as well as how their organization been able to impact the community positively.

Through its drone tour program, The West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce continues to demonstrate that geographical size doesn't matter when it comes to economic vitality.

HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:
"One Valley Healthcare"

CHAMBER:
Vail Valley Partnership

LOCATION:
Edwards, Colorado

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 867 | Employees: 9



[SEE IDEA](#)

HEALTH INSURANCE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION

Striving to lower the high cost of healthcare.

The state of Colorado denied chambers the ability to organize Association Health Plans for their members, providing no relief for the crippling medical costs for many individuals and sole proprietors. The Vail Valley Partnership took the lead role in finding a solution for its community, which has the highest health care costs in the nation.

Partnering with the Small Association Leadership Alliance (SALA), they launched the One Valley Healthcare program. It's a cost-effective alternative to traditional plans and offers affordable, accessible, and effective healthcare options for members (both individuals and businesses).

While not health insurance, the program offers a choice of two preventative care options with 100% coverage. Each plan is coupled with a cost-sharing membership for unforeseen medical expenses and offers various co-payment options.

The program lowers healthcare costs by as much as 60%. Enrollment is monthly (members can join at any time), includes a four-year rate lock, and is available to full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff.

The One Valley Healthcare Program, in partnership with SALA, is one solution to the high cost of healthcare in the mountain region.

HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:
"Chamber Starter Kit"

CHAMBER:
Mission Regional Chamber of
Commerce

LOCATION:
Mission, BC, Canada

CHAMBER STATS:
Members: 450 | Employees: 1



[SEE IDEA](#)

AN IMPACTFUL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Enticing members to use chamber benefits.

Member engagement is a perpetual challenge for chambers of commerce of all sizes and locations, and the Mission Regional Chamber is no exception. Recognizing the role engagement plays in member retention, improved engagement was a top priority in the Mission Regional Chamber of Commerce bi-annual strategic plan.

The team created a "Chamber Starter Kit" to entice new and existing members to take advantage of member benefits available to them. The \$60 kit includes two seats at a chamber luncheon, two registrations to a Business After Hours event, and a one-year enhanced directory listing.

The first kit sold within two hours of the program launch, and 70% of new members purchase the kit.

Members are engaged from the moment they buy it – they browse event options, which increases awareness of chamber happenings. The enhanced listing opportunity drives them to the website, providing additional opportunities to promote member benefits.

The program has proven to be a relatively simple way to increase attendance at chamber events and highlight the networking and online marketing benefits of membership.

The bonus? It has also increased non-dues revenue.

CONCLUSION

Chambers of commerce exist to support and grow business in the communities they serve and are essential to economic growth. Gone are the days when a business would join just because they were new to the area and needed to make connections. It's crucial to stand out and go the extra mile to engage members. At ChamberMaster, we hope that this book gives you a few ideas along with the courage to try something new in your chamber.

CHAMBERMASTER SOFTWARE

ChamberMaster helps organizations grow and retain membership, engage and inform members and prospects, and streamline tedious tasks. The cloud-based system is powerful, easy to use, and designed to manage all the day-to-day operations of your organization. Guaranteed.

CHAMBERMASTER WEBSITE SERVICES

Whether you simply want to populate your existing website with useful ChamberMaster website modules, edit your own website with a WordPress-based content management system, or launch a new website from scratch, we have an experienced developer and design team who will accommodate your objectives and budget.



CUSTOM REPORTING

Build, customize, and distribute reports in a few clicks.



BILLING AND PAYMENT PROCESSING

Integrated process syncs with your accounting software.



COMMUNICATION AND GROUPS

Sync with your email programs and apps to easily connect with members.



EVENTS

Navigate every aspect of the event process.



MARKETING

Publicize members and generate non-dues revenue.



WEBSITE OPTIONS

Integrate ChamberMaster into your existing website or let us build a new one.



SMOOTH TRANSITION, UNLIMITED SUPPORT AND TRAINING

We support you through the transition process and afterwards.

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