

Membership Council
2009 Program of Work with Action Items
Virginia Hardwick, Vice Chair
Julia Kyle, Executive Vice President

Council Mission

The membership council guides the Chamber in recruiting new Chamber members and retaining existing members by offering benefits, services and programs that will help businesses of all sizes prosper. In support of this mission, we are committed to the following projects:

Membership Development:

Goal: It is vital that the membership base continues to grow in order that adequate funding for Chamber programs is provided. In 2009 the membership council goal is to increase net membership gain by 3%.

- In conjunction with Communications Council conduct a media campaign during "Operation Thank You"
- Membership Council along with the other Chamber councils should conduct briefings/ events when issues arise relevant to specific membership divisions inviting prospective members when appropriate.
- In conjunction with the Business and Economic Development Council host events to introduce corporate based new businesses prior to their public opening.
- Post a membership prospect list at all Board meetings.
- In conjunction with other Chamber councils identify ways to increase profile and visibility of the Chamber
- Develop a brochure regarding Chamber membership that banks and County Clerk can make available to new commercial/business accounts.
- Contact list of membership prospects bi- monthly stating "What's New at the Chamber"
- Test Drive Membership – Month long campaign that will allow new businesses to join for 1 year at an 8 month fee and waive \$15 processing fee
- Continue to identify potential members through media ads, new business license lists, etc.
- Make every attempt to meet with prospective members individually – tailoring benefits and services to meet their individual needs.
- Communicate benefits and services specific to membership divisions (ie: website marketing tips)
- Seamless online membership application and join process in place
- Continue to communicate member testimonials stating "How my Chamber membership benefits my business"
- Continue to post Membership vice Chair webcast "Why Join the Chamber" on the Chamber website

Membership Services

Goal: Continue to improve member services and provide outstanding value to Chamber members to assure that we maintain or exceed the national Chamber average of 85.4%

- Encourage membership renewals by offering a monthly drawing for a free web ad
- Introduce three Construction Division meetings during 2009
- Continually emphasize the importance that all Chamber council issues/ actions affect retention
- Determine member's expectations and tailor services to meet those needs
- Expand the Boards *Above and Beyond* activities to include a "new member buddy" system.
- Create an economic crisis "help center" for the Chamber website.
- Identify direct "Return on Membership Investment" benefits
- During 2009 conduct three "How to Maximize your Chamber Membership" events. Incorporate "How to Networking" effectively
- Offer sponsorship/ hosting opportunities as an additional monthly networking event
- Strengthen the link between the Chamber and the Small Business Development Center
- Encourage the Board members to attend member events
- Continue and expand ribbon cuttings and grand openings

- Quarterly renewal payment options for small businesses
- Establish ROI dollar value for all membership benefits and services
- In conjunction with Communications Council introduce Chamber blogs on the website
- Introduce "Ask a Business Expert" on the Chamber website in 2009
- Conduct 2 speed networking events during 2009
- Continue monthly Coffees and quarterly Mixers
- Continue quarterly *Women in Business* focus group
- Conduct 11th annual *Operation Thank You* in February 2009
- Conduct workshops and seminars as important topics emerge
- Continue the *Ambassador* Program
- Organize annual ABC advertising opportunity
- Continue to offer lobby brochure and business card display
- Ensure website member business directory listings are current
- Coordinate membership listings in the 2 newspaper tabloids
- Expand member referrals from the staff and Board
- Continue member marketing opportunities in relocate packet requests
- Continue to invite new members to Board meetings
- Continue to drive members to the many website business resources offered by the US Chamber
- Keep website business links, forms, and general business information on the website current
- Assure that lists and information distributed to members is current and available
- Continue to offer direct contact with purchasers from top employers on the website
- Expand manufacturers supplier/vendor needs listing on the website
- Continue to keep *Biz Tips* and *TSBDC* website information current and relevant

Non Dues Income

Goal: Because Chamber membership dues alone do not fund the Chamber, this council along with the other councils must generate non dues income in order to subsidize 62% the Chamber budget.

- If adequate space becomes available consider a Home and Garden Show /Business show
- Semi-Annual "Annual" Meeting for all Chamber members. Move the Awards Recognition from the Annual Meeting and hold as a separate event.
- Offer affordable levels of event sponsorships for small businesses
- ABC advertising program
- Continue internet package sales
- Continue membership label sales
- Coffee Club/Mixer sponsorships
- New member processing fees

Communications Council Council
2009 Program of Work with Action Items
Sherri Gardner Howell, Vice Chair
Tammi Ford, Executive Vice President

Council Mission

The mission of the Communications Council is to communicate benefits, programs and issues to chamber members, potential members and the general public. This council is also responsible for communicating to newcomers and potential newcomers moving into the area. In support of this mission, we are committed to:

Goal: Increase communications to our members, non members and general public.

- Identify new opportunities to send targeted communications to our members i.e. manufacturing, tourism, etc. Explore more opportunities through TCCE, ACCE and the US Chamber.
- Work with other councils to identify significant and pertinent issues and disseminate to members i.e. growth, workforce, environment, economic forecast, Pellissippi Parkway updates.
- Increase the number of members who complete the area of interest forms by 20% or a total of 450 members. Currently at 10%.
- Identify a way to better communicate with members who do not have email capabilities or have unsubscribed from Chamber emails.
- Increase the number of monthly emails opened by members by 10% by sending pertinent info mixed with giveaways – free ads and sponsorships). Current average is 30% or 458 out of 1598.
- Investigate the feasibility of text messaging to members
- Develop and track monthly Chamberlink and online versions
- Develop and track monthly blast emails -- ChamberNews
- Work with membership to develop a Why Join? brochure.
- Work with all councils and the other partnership organizations on communication needs.
- Work with membership on the return on investment message.
- Work with membership on ABC campaign to launch as annual meeting.
- Expand communications committee
- Schedule all communications to avoid excessiveness
- Coordinate yearly membership materials i.e. Basically Blount, benefits and services brochure, committee involvement.
- Brochures and flyers promoting various activities and events
- Two special newspaper publications each year
- Media coordination and press releases
- Develop Newcomer's guide with The Daily Times

Goal: Increase website traffic by 3% by promoting Chamber website as "The Source" for business, chamber and newcomer information in Blount County.

- Work with membership on launching online social networks
- Work with membership in introducing blogging to website
- Apply for ACCE web award
- Promote the online Blount Area Job Board
- Add photo gallery to website to see and be seen (hire photographer or purchase new camera)
- Look for more opportunities to do podcasts
- Continue to use website links in all forms of communications i.e. email, print, meeting reminders.
- Continue to update and further develop the newcomer's section of the website and list Chamber Members were appropriate.

- Work with membership on the members' only section and add more tips on website i.e. nonprofit, tourism etc.
- Work with all staff on continual updates and adding pertinent information to the website.
- **Develop website campaign driving traffic to site**
- Add more Youtube videos to website

Goal: Continue current non-dues income projects and seek other non-dues revenue opportunities
Income Projects

- Annual meeting
- Map Project
- Basically Blount
- BBQ
- Job Board
- Other: Technology offerings to members?

Community Development Council - 2009
Bob Booker, Vice Chair
Kathy DeLozier, Executive Vice President

Council Mission

The Community Development Council exists to work with local and state leaders in the areas of Environment, Planning and Community Partnerships to ensure that the people of Blount County continue to have an exceptional quality of life.

Goal: Lead efforts to educate and promote sound environmental practices throughout Blount County.

- Continue to play an active leadership role in coordinating and executing the Annual Earth Round Up scheduled for April 25, 2009 at Maryville College and increase participation a minimum of 5%
- Form a group to develop a system to seek out and recognize best environmental practices among chamber members in 2009
- Conduct a minimum of four meetings of the Air Quality Improvement Committee in 2009
- Become the first Chamber of Commerce in the state of Tennessee to become a member of the Tennessee Pollution Project
- Continue strategic partnerships that promote environmental stewardship. They include, but are not limited to:
 - Keep Blount Beautiful
 - Little River Watershed Association
 - Maryville College Center for Strong Communities
 - Regional Clean Air Coalition
 - Local Emergency Planning Committee
 - Little River Water Quality Forum
 - Community Health Initiative – Environmental Health Team

Goal: Introduce and support infrastructure projects that encourage planned growth benefitting the Blount County community.

Planning and Infrastructure:

- Meet with all municipalities to identify infrastructure needs and determine role of chamber in assisting each community
- Based on the findings at the meetings, develop a priority list of infrastructure needs
- Monitor and support priority infrastructure needs
- Visit a community in 2009 to research best practices in planned, sustainable growth
- Host a delegation from the community visited in 2009
- Meet with city and county planners and representatives to discuss common goals in their growth strategies and determine next step for chamber involvement to chamber membership

Transportation:

- By February 2009, develop a list of transportation priority projects and recommend to the Board of Directors for their approval and support
- Conduct a minimum of 4 Transportation meetings to educate the chamber membership on transportation projects and to monitor progress of priority road projects
- Communicate public meetings or opportunities for involvement to chamber membership as needed
- Meet with the Commissioner of Transportation and representatives from TDOT – minimum one meeting

Goal: Identify and support community partnerships that promote and enhance the business community and support an exceptional quality of life.

- Host nine HR Focus Group meetings and sponsor a training seminar for supervisors in August
- Coordinate the 15th annual Job Fair in the Fall resulting in over \$3000 in non-dues income
- Coordinate the 8th Annual Taste of Blount resulting in over \$7000.00 in non-dues income
- Conduct a minimum of 4 Meetings of the Housing Committee
- **Develop a Housing Committee Action Plan by July 2009**
- Pursue and complete the criteria of the Governor's Three Star Award by July 2009
- Coordinate the MLK luncheon in January and assist in programming for the events
- **Work with Pellissippi State and the Tennessee Board of Regents to be designated a P16 Council prior to the Governor's 3 Star review in July.**
- **Meet with City of Maryville and Downtown Association to explore opportunities to promote downtown Maryville in 2009**
- Continue strategic Partnerships with the following: (monthly and quarterly meetings)
 - Downtown Association
 - Community Health Initiative
 - East Tennessee Military Affairs Council – Co-sponsor Veterans Day Luncheon
 - CEO Educators Roundtable
 - United Way, Chamber, Leadership Blount & Center for Strong Communities
- Continue the Adopt-A-School Program with the goal of every school having a partner

Goal: Develop the knowledge base and tools so the Chamber can strengthen its services to and support for small and medium sized businesses.

- **Survey a minimum of 20 small business owners representing all ten chamber divisions, 5 lenders and 5 service providers to identify their needs/pains**
- Research resources to meet the needs identified
- **Develop a resource guide for both lenders and end users in 2009**
- Educate lenders and borrowers about services available to small/medium sized businesses

Goal: Strive to be the best Chamber of Commerce possible.

- **Coordinate, document and submit our application for U.S. Chamber reaccreditation by December 2009**
- **Implement strategies to fulfill and/or exceed the expectations necessary for reaccreditation by December 2009**

Government Relations Council 2009
Joe Tipton, Vice Chair
Fred Forster, President/CEO & Kathy DeLozier, Executive Vice President

Council Mission

The Government Relations Council exists to promote the position of the Chamber membership to local, state, regional and federal legislators and regulators. In support of this mission, we are committed to:

- Enhancing and maintaining the working relationship between business and local, state and federal governments.
- Taking a pro-active approach to legislative and regulative affairs.
- Cooperating with the U. S. Chamber on issues beneficial to our Chamber members.
- Cooperating with the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry on issues beneficial to our Chamber members.

Goal: Develop and advocate a local legislative agenda

Purpose:

Address issues and concerns with the City and County governments that are of interest to Chamber members.

Action:

- Provide a series of a minimum of three briefings with our local leaders from the cities and the county
- Coordinate a meeting with County Commissioners who are current members of the Chamber
- Identify other areas concerning our local citizens – then develop an action plan to implement a strategy to address those areas
- Coordinate meeting with our local educational leaders and our state legislators to address our local school systems and the impact state funding will have on their budgets in 2009 and beyond

Goal: Develop and advocate a State Legislative agenda

Purpose:

Address issues with State Legislators and Regulators that concern the Chamber membership

Action:

- Sponsor a minimum of two legislative coffees with the State officials during the legislative session
- Coordinate a 2009 State legislative trip to provide chamber members the opportunity to meet with State legislators and other State administrators
- Continue to provide State Legislative alerts and monthly newsletters from our federal delegation to Chamber members requesting information
- Host a representative and/or Commissioner of Finance and Administration to speak to the chamber membership

Goal: Develop and advocate a Regional Legislative Agenda

Purpose:

Federal Legislators that impact the region.

Action:

- Assume a leadership role in coordinating the 2009 Regional Legislative Agenda with the Knoxville Partnership and Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce.
- Present to our state legislators and monitor action of the 2009 Regional Legislative Agenda

Goal: Develop and advocate a Federal Legislative Agenda

Purpose:

Address issues with Federal Legislators and Regulators that impact the Chamber membership and community at large

Action:

- Identify issues to be presented to federal representatives that reflect issues of concern or support for the Chamber membership
- Host meetings with our Chamber Members and Federal Legislators
- Continue to provide Federal Legislative alerts and monthly newsletters from our federal delegation to Chamber members requesting information
- Identify and host an activity and/or briefing with Smoky Mountain National Park officials during the 75th celebration
- Meet with leadership from ETEC, Knoxville Chamber and Oak Ridge Chamber to identify other areas for collaboration
- Begin planning for Regional DC trip and agenda for spring 2010

Economic & Business Development Council
Tom Ballard, Vice Chair
Bryan Daniels, Executive Vice President

Council Mission

The Economic and Business Development council exists to create an atmosphere that is conducive to improving economic and employment conditions in Blount County.

Innovation Valley Initiative – Teri Brahams

Goal: To support and assist the Innovation Valley Initiative in areas of workforce development and education.

- Identify top three workforce issues in the region
- Develop a higher education articulation roundtable
- Assist the Blount Education Initiative with the creation and implementation of the Business & Educators task force.

Existing Industry & Excellence Awards – Kristi Foxx

Goal: To recognize business and industry accomplishments, understand issues faced by the existing businesses and industry, and aid in finding solutions to those issues

- Complete 30 existing industry interviews
- Track incidents from existing industry interviews and refer to appropriate entities for resolution with follow-up done by interview team
- Explore purchase of Convention Retail Tourism Service (CRTS) interview software.
- Implement new recognition opportunities developed by 2008 committee by year-end.
- Increase Business Excellence Award applications by 5%

Partnerships – Mark Cate

Goal: To foster and facilitate dialogue in support of ongoing economic development and encourage regional cooperation

- Host 10 Economic Development briefings in Blount County and co-host 2 meetings with ETEC in Oak Ridge
- Meet with 20 VIP's not currently participating in Economic Development briefings to encourage participation
- Work with local governments to help promote their economic development initiatives.

Volunteers in Progress (VIP) – Tish Hickman Goal: To insure that Blount County stays in the forefront of economic growth and progress, the program is designed to focus on retention of existing jobs, expansion of local businesses, and creation of new jobs.

- In 2009 economy, maintain existing members of current VIP group
- Increase new VIP membership by 3%
- Review and/or implement quarterly billing option for VIP's
- Evaluate opportunities for VIP members to host monthly board meetings
- Evaluate and/or implement programs/events to recognize VIP's over the course of the year

Tourism/Travel Council
Byron Begley, Vice Chair
Herb Handy, Executive Vice President

Council Mission

The mission of the Tourism/Travel Council is to address issues unique to this industry in Blount County. This council works in conjunction with the Smoky Mountain Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote both the leisure and business travel market and to maintain an environment that is attractive to tourists. In support of this mission, we are committed to the following projects:

Goal: National Geographic Geotourism/Smart Growth Initiative - complete the grant requirements that will allow for the study and report to be completed

- A three year program that would impact the gateway communities.
- This program would be consistent with the current mission of the SMCVB of sustainable tourism.
- Includes a "transportation plan" that the SMCVB is already involved in (see HWY 321 Task Force, Scenic Highway/Byway Grant)
- Includes Preserve America Communities program.

Goal: Preserve America Communities designation - begin meetings of the Preserve America Committee and to accept and evaluate grant request from committee organizations. The purpose will be to submit a grant to the federal PAC by year-end of 2009.

- Maximize the national recognition in the marketing plan
- Establish a governing committee to enhance the benefits of the program
- Take an active position in the program
 - Attend workshops
 - Seek all grant opportunities
 - Keep Federal/State/county/local government involved by giving regular updates.
 - Develop a relationship with the Federal PA office

Goal: Myers Property - acquire the Myers property and begin the planning process for future development of the property.

- Develop a strategy to move forward with the purchase of the property.
- Develop a concept use plan for the property

Goal: Events/Festivals/Activities - Goal for 2009 is to continue to evaluate each of the above events to ensure that they are meeting the criteria set forth in the guidelines for new activities.

- Maintain Spring/Fall Festivals and other existing activities
- Development of new events
 - New activities criteria
 - Any new events must be sustainable
 - All events must generate revenue equal to expenses
 - All new events must fit the overall mission of the SMCVB
 - All new events should have some positive impact on the community/tourism industry.
 - No event should be commercial in nature

- Winter Heritage Festival (February 2009) **3rd Annual**
 - Designed to be a 3 to 5 day event

To promote visitation during the shoulder season

Targeted towards “Baby Boomers”

- Modeled after the Wilderness Wildlife Week, PForge
 - Designed to be a partnership effort involving other organizations.
 - o SMCVB primary responsibility to use it’s marketing resources to promote the event.
 - o SMCVB to use it’s resources to provide organization and planning
 - Consistent with the SMCVB mission of promoting Heritage Tourism (sustainable tourism)
-
- Smoky Mountain Pottery Festival (June 2009) 2nd **Annual**
 - One day event to be converted to a weekend
 - To promote visitation (upscale)
 - Modeled after Dillsboro pottery festival
 - Designed to attract/target a different type of visitors
 - Promote the “Arts” /crafts in Townsend by providing an exclusive art form that is not currently being promoted.
 - Supporting Heritage Tourism (sustainable tourism)

Goal: Cades Cove Transportation - Goal for 2009 is to develop a marketing campaign that will result in the generation of enough riders that will support the continuation of the program.

- NPCA and partnership developing a business plan for “trolley” transportation to Cades Cove
- Considered a 1 year test program