



Our Community
is Our Business

The **CHAMBER**
Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce

2018-2019

Business Plan

2016-2019

Strategic Plan



A Letter from the Board Chair

Laura Talley
BMO Harris Bank

We live in a time of rapid change. The opportunities and challenges for business are different than they were even just a few years ago. Our community also faces new opportunities and challenges. The greater Eau Claire area is doing well at capitalizing on opportunities and it is a time to stay nimble, forward thinking, and collaborative. The collaboration we have seen in our community over the past few years has been a key to its vibrancy.

Your Chamber's Business Plan has been developed with a mindset of forward thinking, innovation, and collaboration.

Our goals include:

- Taking visible action to champion a strong local and regional economy.
- Being bold in developing the next generation of business leadership
- Providing a compelling portfolio of services to meet the needs of the business community.

Workforce has become critical for the world of economic development over the past few years. The Employers Workforce Initiative, being launched by the Chamber, will help our members solve their immediate and long-term talent challenges. Your Chamber also is collaborating with other economic development and workforce entities in the area to foster an effective and efficient delivery of support to both existing and new businesses to the area.

Your Chamber is focused on providing programming to assist local businesses in their planning process and developing their talent. I would encourage you all to attend the Chamber's Leadership Success Series. Regardless the size of your business, I believe these discussions have relevance to your and provide you with thoughts and ideas that you can apply to your organization.

As public policy decisions exert increasing influence on the business climate, the Chamber has enhanced its Governmental Affairs program to become a more proactive voice for the business community. We are monitoring issues at all levels of government, communicating more frequently with members, and providing opportunities to connect them with policy makers.

While we will continue to provide great networking opportunities, celebrate our local businesses, and continue to be the effective chamber you have known, you will see a few changes in future years. One major change coming this year is a conversion of the Chamber's investment schedule that is currently based on employee count to a value-based system. This will allow members to choose the level of support for the Chamber and provide their companies the benefits that best suits their needs.

As you know, we have 5-star accreditation from the US Chamber of Commerce. Of the 7,000 chambers in the United States, 205 of these are accredited and only 112 are 5-star accredited chambers. In short, it means we are a progressive chamber that is forward thinking in representing its membership.

The future of our Chamber looks very bright due to the strength and enthusiasm of more than 425 Young Professionals. We can trust they will carry on the strong tradition of the Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce.

Laura Talley
Board Chair



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

We will take visible action to champion a strong local and regional economy.

The Chamber is the voice of business for the Chippewa Valley region, supporting growth in the marketplace and an entrepreneurial spirit. The Chamber has a distinct role to play as the advocate for policies that promote a pro-business environment and support efficient and effective government. Collaborating with other local organizations will help ensure success for the business community as well.

- The Chamber will be the first stop for new and growing businesses for business development information.
- We will foster collaboration among economic development organizations.
- We will celebrate and encourage entrepreneurship.
- We will continually educate the public on the value and importance of local business.
- We will be a strong voice and take action on public policy and community initiatives that impact economic prosperity.
- We will become a champion for Chamber members on talent attraction and workforce development initiatives.

We will be bold in developing the next generation of business leadership.

The Chamber must commit to making the organization the best it can be through an emphasis on future leadership and excellence. Through ongoing development and planning, the Chamber will be ready to embrace new opportunities and continue a track record of success.

- We will ensure an effective and successful CEO succession plan and clearly and consistently communicate these plans.
- We also will ensure effective and successful volunteer leadership succession in our organization.
- We will enhance the effectiveness of the Board of Directors.
- We will create healthy diversity in the broadest sense including industry diversity on the Board and throughout membership.
- We will embrace and celebrate those that take risks to further our community prosperity.

We will provide a compelling portfolio of products and services, meeting the needs of the business community.

All Chamber programs and services should be evaluated in order to ensure the organization is providing the maximum amount of value to members. Ongoing research and development on industry trends and best practices is essential to ensuring the Chamber is staying current in representing business interests. Marketing or media relations can help strengthen the Chamber's visibility to stakeholders in the marketplace.

- We will invest in research and development to both determine the needs of programming for our members as well as provide a contemporary portfolio of products and services.
- We will continually move toward a balancing of dues and non-dues revenue stream to support the Chamber.
- We will review other options including tiered dues structures for a future change in our pricing model.
- We will invest in marketing or media relations to better tell the story of the Chamber and the business community to local residents.
- We will continuously measure customer satisfaction in order to determine our value proposition to our members.



The Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce is proud to be a part of the community for more than 100 years.

Mission Statement

The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce is the advocate of business.

Vision Statement

The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce will be the leader in the progressive development of the Chippewa Valley through the efforts of the business community.

COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

Ambassadors

Chair: Michelle Heinzen, Bremer Bank

Staff Liaison: Cheri Weinke

Goal: To represent and promote the Chamber and retain Chamber members.

- Assist the Chamber in a retention rate that exceeds 90 percent over three years.
- Assist in communicating the distinctions, services and achievements of the Chamber to the business community.
- Host and maintain participation at 11 Business After Hours to an average attendance of 180 people each month.
- Host ribbon cutting and ground breaking ceremonies, open houses and special Chamber events.



The Chamber Annual Meeting celebrates the accomplishments for the year.



More than 3,000 people attend Breakfast in the Valley every year.

Annual Meeting

Chair: Marci Boyarski, Wipfli LLP

Staff Liaisons: David Minor and Chrystal Mills

Goal: To plan and execute the Chamber's 104th Annual Meeting.

- Transfer the leadership of chair of the Board from Tim Benedict, Benedict Refrigeration, to Laura Talley, BMO Harris Bank.
- Create a program to recognize volunteers, highlight the past year's accomplishments and set the tone for fiscal year 2018-2019.
- Recognize outstanding volunteers, committee chairs, Small Businesses of the Year, Ambassador of the Year, Community Development, Chamber Volunteer of the Year, Public Employee of the Year, Outstanding Young Professional and Woman of Achievement awards winners.
- Announce the inductees of the ninth class of the Business Hall of Fame.

Breakfast in the Valley

Chair: Nicholas Mohr, Rhom Construction LLC

Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher

Goal: To recognize the vital role of agriculture in the local economy and promote positive relations between the business and farm communities.

- Host the 22nd annual Breakfast in the Valley on June 8 to promote agriculture in the Chippewa Valley and educate the public.
- Serve more than 3,000 people.
- Present the Friend of Agriculture Award to a person or business who has contributed to agriculture, agri-business relations and the agricultural economy in the Chippewa Valley.
- Recognize the Eau Claire County Land Conservation award winners.
- Recognize an Eau Claire County Farm Family of the Year.
- Support agriculture through educational and financial efforts in the Chippewa Valley.

Business Expo & Job Fair

*Chair: Emily Thompson, Woods & Water Realty
Staff Liaison: Becky Seelen*

Goal: To plan and execute the 2018 Business Expo & Job Fair.

- Along with sponsors, host the 2018 Business Expo and VIP Reception on October 16. The Expo is an opportunity for exhibitors to expand their markets through a display of products and services while networking with other businesses and community members.
- Host a job fair during the public hours of the Business Expo.
- In conjunction with the Professional Education Committee, conduct a seminar series at the event.

Business Salutes Eau Claire Golf Classic

*Chair: Connie Pedersen, Charter Bank
Staff Liaison: David Minor*

Goal: Conduct an enjoyable golf outing that promotes networking for members.

- Host the 33rd annual Business Salutes Eau Claire Golf Classic for 250 people on May 21 at the Eau Claire Golf & Country Club.
- Structure the event as a source of non-dues revenue for the Chamber.



The Business Expo & Job Fair provides an opportunity for Chamber members to showcase their products and services and recruit employees.

Business & Workforce Development

*Chair: Monica Obrycki, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative
Staff Liaison: Scott Rogers*

Goal: To be a champion for employers in the Chippewa Valley as they work to solve their immediate and long-term talent and workforce challenges. Implement the Employers Workforce Initiative.

- Approach workforce as a critical supply chain issue. Identify area workforce-related activities among education, government, non-profits, business and industry groups, and the private sector and assess their value as part of the talent pipeline.
- Serve as a clearinghouse for Chamber members on workforce-related information and programs, helping point them to resources that address their specific challenges.
- Communicate regularly with Chamber members to identify the most critical issues specific to our region and its employers and promote opportunities for direct action by those Chamber members.
- Participate and collaborate with other entities where the Chamber's knowledge and resources can provide value to achieving important goals.
- Maximize our area's unique assets and value in attracting and retaining talent.
- Identify gaps and overlap in area workforce efforts and advocate for changes or action as needed.
- Serve as a catalyst to help assure cooperation, collaboration, communication, timeliness and accountability across regional workforce efforts. Convene leaders as needed to tackle specific opportunities and challenges. Support local, regional and state workforce initiatives that have a direct impact on employers.



Attendees at Business Salutes Eau Claire enjoy golf, door prizes, great meals and a day of networking.

Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance

[Limited to members of the Chamber Executive Committees]

Chair: Laura Talley, BMO Harris Bank

Staff Liaison: David Minor

Goal: To keep open lines of communication on regional issues between chambers in Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Menomonie.

- Meet annually with the executive committees of the three chambers in the Alliance.
- Facilitate the 25th annual Chippewa Valley Rally trip to Madison in January 2019 to present issues that are important to the Chippewa Valley.
- Explore opportunities to deal with emerging business issues using the combined resources in the Chippewa Valley.
- Host Business at the Airport on August 2.

Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

Chair: Wesley Escondo, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Wisconsin

Staff Liaison: Scott Rogers

Goal: To share information and learn best practices about diversity, inclusion and minority business.

- Leverage members' combined experience and knowledge to advance diversity and inclusion programs and practices throughout professions.
- Provide business members with access to information, individuals and ideas that will help them build more economically and socially inclusive organizations.
- Become a forum to discuss new diversity and inclusion ideas and initiatives.



Chippewa Valley Rally brings important economic issues to policy makers in Madison.

Excellence In Education

Chair: Kayann Bock, Sylvan Learning Center

Staff Liaison: Becky Seelen

Goal: To provide recognition for outstanding students and educators from 10 area high schools.

- Plan and implement a quality Excellence in Education Banquet on May 2 honoring 60 area high school students and their educators.
- Recognize outstanding commitment to education through the Unsung Hero, Contributor to Education and Innovation in Teaching awards.

Good Government Council (GGC)

Chair: Scott Biederman, Musky Tank, LLC

Staff Liaison: Scott Rogers

Goal: To inform and educate members on business issues and candidates' stand on these issues. The GGC is independent of any political party, candidates or organization except the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce.

- Send out questionnaires to candidates for spring and fall elections for city, county and state races and share the results with members.



Eggs & Issues policy breakfasts facilitate communication between government and the business community.

Governmental Affairs

Chair: Scott Biederman, Musky Tank, LLC

Staff Liaison: Scott Rogers

Goal: Be a strong voice and take action on public policy and community initiatives that impact economic prosperity.

- Implement an enhanced governmental affairs program focused upon advocacy, accountability and action. The focus includes:
 - Advocacy on business-related issues at the local, state and federal levels
 - Connections and relationships with policy makers
 - Timely information and education for Chamber members
 - Equipping members for effective involvement and influence
- Key governmental affairs activities include:
 - A robust schedule of events connecting Chamber members with policy makers: Monthly Eggs & Issues breakfasts, Lawmaker Luncheons, Candidate Forums and questionnaires, the annual Chippewa Valley Rally at the State Capitol, the Policy Leadership Institute to equip Chamber members for effective involvement, and opportunities to participate in other local, regional, state and national programs.
 - Maintain relationships with governmental officials, monitor issues and recommend action when needed.
 - Publish the Business Issues Agenda affirming the Chamber’s positions on key economic issues including taxes, governmental accountability, health care, education, workforce, economic development, infrastructure and transportation, energy and the environment.
 - Timely Business Advocacy Updates and alerts for Chamber members.

Green Business Initiative

Chair: Gordon Howie, Mayo Clinic Health Systems

Staff Liaison: David Minor

Goal: To promote the interest of businesses that are committed and engaged in environmentally responsible operations and practices, also known as green business practices.

- Give recognition through the Chamber’s website and other marketing materials to the members who have been designated as green businesses.
- Encourage members to submit Green Business applications. Seventy businesses have been recognized, with a goal of increasing the recognized businesses to 100.
- Conduct renewal process for those businesses completing their first two years.
- Conduct educational programs and identify best practices on sustainability.
- Promote the City’s sustainability awards program.

Health & Wellness Committee

Chair: Celestee Roufs, Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire

Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher

Goal: To promote the benefits of workplace wellness as an effective strategy to improve employee well-being and productivity and as a healthcare cost containment measure, and recognize businesses that implement wellness best practices.

- Continue the Workplace Wellness Initiative for Chamber members with a goal of increasing the total number of award holders to 30.
- Develop and maintain a Workplace Wellness Network to provide opportunities for education and interaction among businesses interested in workplace wellness.
- Collaborate with Healthy Communities and other complementary efforts to advance common goals, including a healthier, more productive workforce.
- Monitor healthcare and wellness-related policy that would affect the business community.
- Promote the benefits of a healthy workforce and recognize businesses that implement wellness best practices.
- Host the annual Downtown Business Community Wellness Walk and other health and wellness-related educational seminars and events.

Make Eau Claire

Staff Liaison: David Minor

Goal: Support growth in the market place and entrepreneurial spirit.

- Facilitate a quarterly meeting with organizations that work with entrepreneurs to foster communication and collaboration.
- Celebrate and encourage entrepreneurship.
- Support events to help entrepreneurs know how to be successful and find necessary resources.
- Develop partnerships where appropriate.

Professional Education Committee

Chair: Deb Marshall, Wipfli LLP
Staff Liaison: Becky Seelen

Goal: To implement educational seminars and programs that will meet the needs of Chamber members.

- Develop and promote seminars to increase total participation, membership penetration and unique attendees.
- Facilitate the Chamber's Leadership Success Series, which offers a platform for executives of high profile companies to share their story of success as well as their vision and thoughts facing business today and in the future.
- Facilitate the Lunch and Learn monthly seminar series featuring a variety of topics presented by Chamber members during the noon hour.
- In partnership with the Chippewa Valley Society of Human Resource Management, conduct the sixth annual Human Resource Conference on April 3 to educate members on important human resource issues.
- Present the ninth annual Marketing and Social Media Conference on September 20 to educate members on social media and new technologies that can enhance their business.
- Present the fifth annual Sales Conference to educate members on sales techniques and trends.
- In conjunction with the Business Expo & Job Fair Committee, conduct seminars at the Expo.
- Conduct a Women's Leadership Summit to serve as a catalyst to empower women in and out of the workplace.
- Promote the Speakers Bureau, which features local speakers on business topics, to the community.

SOHO (Small Office/Home Office)

Chair: Stephanie Shreve, CJC Company
Staff Liaison: Amy Muehlbauer

Goal: Empower small business members by providing specialized programs and services.

- Promote and facilitate round-table discussions for small business owners.
- Provide educational resources to assist in addressing issues of small business owners.
- Promote and create awareness of the impact of buying local.
- Encourage networking among members.

Young Professionals of the Chippewa Valley

Chair: Aaron Black, EO Johnson Business Technologies
Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher

Goal: Engage and empower young professionals by providing relevant educational, networking and community events.

- Provide opportunities for young professionals to enhance their professional and personal lives.
- Encourage young professionals to become committed to the Chippewa Valley by providing volunteer and community service opportunities.
- Continue strong partnerships with educational institutions to help retain young professionals in the community.
- Maintain an online presence to encourage networking among members and reach additional young professionals in the area.
- Educate young professionals on Chamber and community leadership opportunities.



Young Professionals volunteer at a variety of non-profit organizations throughout the year.



SOHO members participate in a variety of events to connect and exchange ideas.

OTHER PROGRAMS

Business Hall of Fame Inductee Luncheon

An annual luncheon to recognize the ninth class of inductees into the Chamber's Business Hall of Fame in June.

Chamber/University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Business Breakfast

Held in March or April to bring the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and business community members together for a better understanding of what each other is doing.

Chamber/Chippewa Valley Technical College Business Breakfast

Held in October to bring the Chippewa Valley Technical College and business community members together for a better understanding of what each other is doing.

Chamber Buy Local Bucks Program

A program owned and operated solely by the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce using a local financial institution. The Chamber Bucks are redeemable only at Chamber member businesses as a "Buy Local" program.

Western & Central Wisconsin Wage Survey

An annual survey reporting on wages for commonly recognized non-executive jobs in the area. Businesses from Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Marshfield, Menomonie, Rice Lake, Stevens Point, Wausau, Winona and Wisconsin Rapids participate in the survey. Survey data collection begins in March and is available for purchase in July. The name of our survey changed to reflect regions that joined our 2018 survey.

Community Communications Committee (CCC)

The Chamber facilitates the CCC, which represents 20 CEOs of community organizations that meet for interactive discussions on important community issues.

Member Roundtables

Member roundtables are conducted six to eight times per year with invited Eau Claire Chamber members to discuss what is impacting their business and the community.

Receptions

The Chamber Board of Directors meet with members of the Eau Claire and Altoona City Councils, Eau Claire County Board and Eau Claire School Board to keep open lines of communication.

Referral Program

The Membership Referral Program allows current members to refer new businesses to the Chamber. A referral is a business or prior member (who hasn't been a member for more than a year) that joins the Chamber during a given calendar year as a direct result of a current member's efforts to solicit their membership.

Small Business Breakfast

Held in May during Small Business Month to recognize two Small Businesses of the Year members that were named at the Chamber's Annual Meeting.

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Welcome Bags

Assemble 2,600 welcome bags for new University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire freshmen and transfer students to acquaint them with the Eau Claire community and businesses.

Working Mothers Luncheon

Host the fifth annual Working Mothers Luncheon on May 10 to provide an educational and networking opportunity for working mothers.

Reception for Non-Profit Organizations

The Chamber will host a casual reception for two to three representatives from each non-profit Chamber member to show appreciation for what they do for the community.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

AM Exchange

Quarterly morning networking event held at a Chamber member business that includes a speed networking opportunity.

Business After Hours

Monthly networking opportunity on the second Monday evening at a host business with hors d'oeuvres and prizes.

Business at the Airport

Hosted by the Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance, this event is held on August 2 at the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport with 30 business exhibitors, hors d'oeuvres and prizes.

Holiday Open House

Held December 6 at the Chamber office to allow members a time to network and celebrate the holidays while showcasing Chamber member restaurants and beverage distributors.

Your Chamber Orientation

Held monthly at the Chamber office for new and existing members to gain an in-depth knowledge about Chamber programs, activities and involvement.

EAU CLAIRE CHAMBER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Goal: To provide a vehicle for members to contribute charitable support to Chamber educational programs and projects including Leadership Eau Claire™, Real Life Academy and Youth Leadership Eau Claire.

The Foundation has established an Endowment Fund, which has raised \$136,800 towards the goal of \$400,000, for youth leadership programs. Additionally, sponsorships from area businesses and further support from the Foundation provide funding for students to take part in Youth Leadership Eau Claire™. The Foundation also awards a fully-paid scholarship each year from the Chamber 100th Year Scholarship Fund to an individual from a small business or non-profit organization to participate in the Leadership Eau Claire™ program.

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BMO Harris Bank

Sue Tietz
McDonough Manufacturing Company

Leadership Eau Claire™

Chair: Kristin Schmidt, M3 Insurance

Staff Liaison: Becky Seelen

Goal: To increase participants' community knowledge through skill building exercises and educational days that stimulate them to take an active leadership role in shaping our community.

- Conduct the 37th annual Leadership Eau Claire™ program for 45 participants from a cross section of the community and graduate them prepared to volunteer their services to the community.
- Instill in participants an understanding of volunteerism, citizenship and community trusteeship in an effort to build on Eau Claire's quality of life.

Leadership Eau Claire™ Alumni

Chair: Jeff Stevens, Chestnut Technology Consulting

Staff Liaison: Becky Seelen

Goal: To provide ongoing leadership programs and networking opportunities for Leadership Eau Claire™ alumni.

- Host the annual Alumni Luncheon as a networking opportunity for alumni and to recognize the newest program graduates as well as announce the new class members.
- Encourage Leadership Eau Claire™ alumni to participate in the Curriculum, Executive and Alumni committees to create a well-rounded program.
- Recruit new members for the Leadership Eau Claire™ program.
- Coordinate a community service volunteer activity to engage LEC alumni.
- Organize a LEC Alumni Day to refresh alumni on new community issues.



The Leadership Eau Claire™ class begins the program each year with an opening retreat.

Real Life Academy

*Chair: Phil Swiler, Loffler Companies
Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher*

Goal: To plan and execute the Real Life Academy, an event for area high school students and business volunteers to bring the two groups together. The Academy is designed to provide “real life scenarios” with experienced volunteers that have met the day-to-day challenges of money management and built them into their lives successfully.

- Coordinate the Real Life Academy in the fall and spring for students at Altoona, Augusta, Fall Creek, Memorial, North and Regis high schools. Current and long-term goal is to have 100 percent of all graduating seniors at the participating high schools attend the Academy before graduation.
- Recruit Chamber members to sponsor and volunteer at the two academies and maintain the partnership between the business and educational communities.



Approximately 100 Chamber members volunteer their time at the Real Life Academy.



Approximately 600 area high school students complete Real Life Academy each year.

Youth Leadership Eau Claire

*Chair: Jenna Ziegler, Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire
Staff Liaison: Becky Seelen*

Goal: To provide an opportunity for area high school juniors to enhance their knowledge and develop leadership skills that will empower and motivate them to become involved and committed to their community.

- Conduct the 16th annual Youth Leadership Eau Claire program for up to 36 students from Altoona, Augusta, Fall Creek, Memorial, North and Regis high schools.
- Nurture young leaders and encourage them to remain in or return to Eau Claire's workforce.



Youth Leadership Eau Claire students complete community service projects to help non-profit organizations.



Members of Youth Leadership Eau Claire tour area businesses in Eau Claire.

BOARD AND STAFF

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BMO Harris Bank

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WEAU 13 News

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