



Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce  
Strategic Plan, 2018 – 2020

*The Time Is Now:  
2019: The Collective Strength of Our Voices*



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## Introduction: The Relevance of Chambers, It's Time to Adjust

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The economic environment continues to shift the focus of business. And the ever-evolving behaviors and expectations of the next generation are impacting organizations' current practices. On top of this is an environment altogether testing chambers' relevance into an uncertain future.

Indeed, economic swings, rapidly changing technology, and demographic shifts have provided new opportunities for associations (some more than others) because all these changes have redefined the very meaning of membership. What members – and clients, employees, and consumers – want now is vastly different than what they wanted even 3 years ago. Membership itself won't end, but belonging out of tradition or habit might.

Based on American Association of Association Executives (ASAE) research, “the option to enroll is based on a need to engage in greater-good initiatives, as well as direct benefit appeals. Chambers have the potential to excel in both, but must do so.”

To maintain our relevance, SPACC must be nimble enough to adapt - while maintaining our inherent focus on economic sustainability. Year 2 we continue to focus on our three strategic priorities, informed by the reality that the very future of chambers, and business decision-makers' willingness to continue to invest in communities by joining, will depend on our success as we:

- ✓ **Identify Our Value Proposition, Beyond “Civic Rent.”** Baseline loyalty to an institution, absent a connection to impact and opportunity, will continue to decline. With the time starvation and competition for attention, professionals are making strategic decisions about where to invest. We must honor this and demonstrate our value if we hope to remain relevant in an environment increasingly competitive for time, talent and resources. ROI for our investors, rather than the simple act of joining or even attending, will drive our success. Indeed, the strongest chambers already recognize that our future is not only in transactional memberships but also in the nurturing of commitments from investors, those interested in community advancement and advocacy. If possible, we also must determine how to measure our value in terms that rely less upon attendance and participation. We must recognize and monetize our tribal qualities. One member joins with the desire to *get something from* the chamber; another involves the craving to *get something done through* the chamber. And neither necessarily is tied directly to a company's size.
  
- ✓ **Capitalize on the Generational Opportunity.** Millennials will make up most of the workforce by 2025. And every chamber priority, from education to transportation to business climate to place-making will be impacted by such demographic change. Generation and race/culture issues are tightly intertwined. More important than an understanding of specific demographic clusters is the need to structure our organization to be out front of the needs of *every* incoming or elevating demographic subset. Group involvement and participation is hardwired, regardless of the generational angst we feel in any decade. We have an innate need to belong. True, some associations have declined, but neighborhood associations have flourished – as have others that provide more than “civic obligation” as the motivation for membership.

- ✓ **Embrace an Inclusive Future.** We must be a proven champion of equity initiatives and cross-cultural dialogue. Professionals of color and indigenous populations (POCI) must be represented in all aspects of our work. A sustained and proactive approach will enable us to play a meaningful role in advancing equity moving forward. Our focus must be threefold: workplace (equity of opportunity within companies); marketplace (increased markets for minority enterprises and recognition of the buying power of minority populations); and workforce (eliminating the disparity in unemployment, getting every interested worker “off the bench”). Talented, skilled professionals, who long have been expected to choose place first and job second, are increasingly settling in diverse communities. Lack of inclusion and equity of opportunity also feeds the political and social fragmentation experienced elsewhere.
  
- ✓ **Identify Alternate Revenue Streams.** As indicated by all the above, our future viability depends on a value proposition built on more than asking the same investors for more money.

SPACC is a high reliability organization. We continue to welcome input that helps us get better. I look forward to guidance from SPACC’s Board of Directors as we continue to grow, as well as support of our pivots when we try something new.

The Strategic Plan continues to represent SPACC’s top priorities and goals, serving as a road map to lead the organization forward over the next 2 years. We have identified different levels of approach: in some areas we plan to take the lead; in others, we will partner with others in the ongoing work; and in other areas we will support the work being done by others, participating on an ad hoc basis.

A proposed framework and goals for the Year 2, 2019, are included herein: **2019: The Collective Strength of Our Voices.**

***The East Metro works – for all of us.***

Respectfully,

*Brenda L. Kyle*

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President and CEO  
Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce



# SPACC Strategic Plan

2018 - 2020

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## Who We Are

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*The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce is the one of the largest regional chambers in Minnesota. Founded in 1868 by local employers, SPACC today is an independent organization representing over 1,200 entities – for profit and nonprofit alike - and a regional workforce of over 800,000 people.*

*SPACC's work is guided by two fundamental principles:*

- 1. Community livability: it fuels success for both the employer and the employee at a regional level. Is a tactic, a mindset, AND an outcome.*
- 2. Equity: the lens which guides all our work. Is an imbedded value.*

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## Our Vision

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*SPACC is the region's premier commerce organization harnessing the collective strength of employers to drive economic prosperity to the broadest reaches of our community. The East Metro works – for all of us.*

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## Our Mission

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***SPACC is changing our economic future – one job at a time.***

- SPACC is a convener and coalition-builder for our region's most critical issues.*
- SPACC integrates the growth of jobs and tax base with the broader priorities of livability: workforce, education, transportation, and culture.*
- SPACC translates thinking into action through powerful advocacy, partnerships, and programming.*
- SPACC promotes economic growth, working towards goals that we can't accomplish alone.*

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## Our Core Values

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### Challenge What's Possible

- ✓ *What got us HERE won't get us THERE. Determine what we must change to prepare us for what's ahead.*
- ✓ *Be brave and engage in civil discourse to challenge one another and elevate our game.*
- ✓ *From a huddle to a shared journey... we are stronger together.*
- ✓ *We are navigating change; necessary to remain relevant in a shifting landscape.*

### Work in Partnership

- ✓ *Capitalize on strengths/priorities/initiatives already underway.*
- ✓ *Draw on the strength of members. Determine how can we further engage and empower them.*
- ✓ *Business is an essential contributor to the broader community ecosystem. We want to do our part.*
- ✓ *Together we can create a winning environment for commerce.*

### Activate on Diversity and Inclusion

- ✓ *Diversity is our strength, our opportunity. Embrace it.*
- ✓ *Inclusion is an environment that integrates individuals of all demographics into one workforce.*
- ✓ *Intentional inclusion ensures that we develop the critical connections that attract diverse talent, encourage participation, foster innovation, and lead to economic growth.*

### Demonstrate Integrity

- ✓ *We CAN do well by doing good.*
- ✓ *Take responsibility for and pride in our role in building community.*
- ✓ *Earn the trust of members and the broader community.*
- ✓ *Employ a values-based strategy to advance our work.*

### I. Economic Inclusion

Transform SPACC into the organization that all other chambers aspire to emulate, by mobilizing the region's employer community and harnessing the power of diversity, inclusion, cultural competency, and equity to drive growth and expansion.

SPACC must lead the way in unlocking the economic potential of the currently underserved and under-represented workforce and business community. Inclusion and diversity are just plain good business.

We must move from discussion to action. Economic inclusion runs parallel to economic development at the top of our priority list. ***It is an economic imperative.*** Demographic shifts necessitate our embrace of it, assets on the bench and not in the game demand we pay attention to it, our future vibrancy and relevance require we succeed at it. We must continue the difficult and honest conversations. Each of us perceives our community through our own lens, and yet we all consider the East Metro community "ours." Chamber membership and participation must harness the talent of the broader employer community.

Inclusion is the umbrella under which all our other priorities operate. *That said, in order demonstrate that priority clearly and jumpstart this vision, we are making it a strategic priority with executables to mark our progress.* The business value of an inclusive community is well documented. SPACC must be a leader in acting on this – executing on strategies to further develop and sustain an inclusive workspace and leverage its benefits.

Goal 1: Grow membership from across the broader, more diverse business community, with an emphasis on minority, women, and veteran-owned business enterprises

Goal 2: Supply chain diversity: increase employer participation and foster relationships with businesses owned by POCI, women, veterans, etc.

Goal 3: Further develop the equity committee through training to develop meaningful strategies for expanding the work into the broader membership

Goal 4: Develop and support educational platforms/programming focused on equity

## II. Economic/Community Development

It's time to shift and expand the purpose and practices of economic development to generate continuous growth and prosperity across the broader community. Promote and enhance a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economy by growing and retaining our existing employer community and recruiting new industry across the region. Partner in the implementation of a Downtown Development Initiative.

Build on our ability to convene employers and community leaders, to further promote the region's entrepreneurial spirit. Recruit new employers, help existing enterprises grow. Support a culture of innovation.

Talent Pipeline: As the labor pool shrinks, we will continue to see a widening gap between available jobs and people to fill them. Lead the effort to "educate for employment." Welcome, retain and advance newcomers; train tomorrow's leaders; prioritize diversity in hiring; support programs to partner ready workers with hungry employers, and build new pipelines to meet new or emerging needs.

Livability Issues: Housing, homelessness, downtown safety, cleanliness, overall vitality. They enhance our quality of life, the attractiveness of our region, and our overall desire to call it "home." Livability issues also contribute to improved economic performance and a more vibrant, competitive environment for both residents and commercial investment.

Goal 1: Identify and support developing industry clusters

Goal 2: Drive new employers into Saint Paul through business retention, expansion and attraction efforts

Goal 3: Partner on talent development and retention

Goal 4: Partner on targeted development based on place: Downtown Saint Paul, Midway, broader East Metro

Goal 5: Partner in the advancement of the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance

Goal 6: Support partner work on livability issues

### III. Voice of Commerce

Continue elevating our leadership in representing the voice of commerce, particularly in our advocacy work. Establish our proactive platform of issues, and how we participate: lead/partner/support. Keep members informed and represent commercial interests to the local and statewide political representatives. Experts/collaborators to drive changed thinking around the fundamental imperative of a vital economic community to advance all-inclusive community vibrancy. Promote and model civil discourse as a solutioning tool which results in us working together to find better solutions to complex issues. Maintain our 360 degree approach which allows for a voice from all in shaping our policy agenda.

Goal 1: Lead in mobility/light rail/bus lines and infrastructure

Goal 2: Lead in land use

Goal 3: Partner on talent development and retention

Goal 4: Endorse/Support issues of livability