

The **Red Deer District Chamber of Commerce's 2025-2027 Strategic Plan** is a guiding document that outlines our commitment to fostering a thriving business environment in our community. This plan is essential in steering the operational activities of the Chamber, ensuring that we continue to leverage our core strengths while capitalizing on new areas of opportunity.

This year, as we celebrate our 130th anniversary, we reflect on our rich history and recognize the strategic planning that has guided us throughout this time. From the Chamber's inception, before Red Deer was even founded, to the countless contributions that have shaped our community, we acknowledge the significant role the Chamber has played in making Red Deer what it is today. This strategic plan is one more step in a long journey of impactful work and dedication, setting the stage for our future success.

Our vision is to be a collaborative leader in building a globally significant region and a vibrant community.

Our mission is to foster an environment where businesses can lead, innovate, be sustainable, and grow.

This strategic plan embodies these principles, driven by the belief that a strong business community is the cornerstone of a strong overall community.

The strategic priorities outlined in this plan focus on key areas such as increasing membership value, revenue diversification, amplifying our presence in the community, fostering a collaborative business ecosystem, enhancing economic development, and continuing to be the voice of business in the Red Deer district. Each priority is designed to ensure that we **Charge Ahead** effectively, driving positive change and growth for our members and the community at large.

The development of this strategic plan has been a collaborative effort between the Board of Directors and the CEO, underscoring the collective passion and commitment to a shared vision of success. Each board member, elected by their fellow Chamber members, volunteers their time, expertise, and influence as business and community leaders, demonstrating their deep commitment to the prosperity of our region.

I want to personally thank each and every one of them for their time and dedication to our community.

Our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan is not just a roadmap for the next few years; it is a testament to our ongoing legacy of supporting the business community. It is one small step in the direction of our future, ensuring that the Chamber remains a vital, dynamic force for the next 130 years and beyond.

Together, we **Charge Ahead**.



Mike Syzszka
President - Red Deer District Chamber
Founder & CEO - Reaction Digital

Strategic Opportunity Analysis

As we chart the course for the Red Deer District Chamber, it is essential to build upon a thorough understanding of our current environment. This section summarizes the SWOT analysis conducted and the insights gained from our January 2024 strategic planning session, providing a foundation for our strategic opportunities.

Key Insights from the January 2024 Planning Session

Membership Value: Ensuring the Chamber remains relevant and valuable to current and prospective members is essential for sustained growth and influence.

Emphasis on Revenue Diversification: Recognizing the risk of relying heavily on a few key events for revenue, we identified the need to diversify our income sources to ensure financial resilience.

Marketing & Communication Enhancement: The session highlighted the need to amplify our voice through improved marketing strategies, leveraging technology and storytelling to engage our target audience.

Collaborative Ecosystem Development: There is a strong desire to foster a collaborative business environment in Red Deer, creating a unified physical and digital space where businesses can thrive and innovate together.

Economic Development Focus: Enhancing Red Deer's attractiveness to external businesses emerged as a critical priority, aiming to drive economic growth and diversify the local economy.

These insights, coupled with our SWOT analysis below, inform our strategic priorities and actions for the 2025-2027 period. By addressing our weaknesses and threats while capitalizing on our strengths and opportunities, we can effectively **Charge Ahead** and drive positive change for our members and the broader community.

SWOT Analysis Summary

Strengths

- **Strong Relationships:** Our strong relationships with members, the media, and other chambers enhance our credibility and influence.
- **Stable Staff & Board:** Long-term staff and passionate volunteers, working under strong executive leadership, guided by a passionate and engaged board of directors backed by a robust board election process, contribute to our stability and continuity.
- **Community Leadership:** The Chamber is recognized for its leadership in the community, evidenced by our involvement in key initiatives and events.
- **Financial Management:** Revenue surplus, effective financial management and fiscal responsibility enable us to sustain operations and invest in new opportunities.
- **Innovative Programs:** Successful events and programs, such as Agri-Trade and partnerships with local institutions, underscore our ability to innovate and adapt.

Weaknesses

- **Communication & Technology:** There is a need to improve our communication strategies and technology utilization to better engage with members and the community.
- **Membership Growth:** Challenges in growing and diversifying our membership base highlight the need to improve the membership value proposition and enhance new member engagement strategies.
- **Event Diversity:** Current events are perceived as “cliquey,” necessitating a broader range of events to appeal to diverse member interests.
- **Economic Development Role:** Clarifying our role in economic development is essential to enhance our impact and relevance.
- **Membership Value Proposition:** While we recognize the immense value the Chamber contributes to the community, particularly through our relationships with stakeholder groups and our advocacy for the business community, we acknowledge that these benefits are not always as apparent to our members. We see an opportunity to enhance the direct value of Chamber membership to ensure that members clearly perceive the benefits of being part of the Chamber.

Opportunities

- **Membership Growth Potential:** With over 800 current members representing less than 20 percent of the total registered businesses in our region, there is substantial potential for membership growth.
- **Digital Transformation:** Leveraging digital tools and platforms can enhance member services, communication, education, and event delivery.
- **Community Partnerships:** Expanding collaborations with local organizations and stakeholders can amplify our reach and influence.
- **Revenue Diversification:** Identifying and developing new revenue streams will reduce dependency on key events to ensure financial sustainability and growth.
- **Marketing & Outreach:** Strengthening our marketing efforts can increase awareness of the Chamber's value and attract new members.
- **Economic Development Initiatives:** Playing a proactive role in regional economic development can position the Chamber as a catalyst for growth.

Threats

- **Economic Uncertainty:** Fluctuations in the economy, including potential recessions and interest rate changes, could impact our operations and member businesses.
- **Political Climate:** Changes in political leadership and policies may affect our advocacy efforts and member interests.
- **Increased Competition:** There is more competition from business support, education, and networking groups than ever before. We recognize the need to be competitive in these areas to maintain and grow our membership.
- **Post-Pandemic Impact:** The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and future similar disruptions could affect our events and member interactions.
- **Self-Sustaining Organization:** As a 100% self-sustaining organization, the Chamber does not receive ongoing government grants or funding to subsidize our operations, with rare exceptions such as during COVID-19 or one-off grants for specific projects. Our revenue is directly derived from membership fees and earned revenue from events, education, and value-added services. This reliance on member support underscores the critical need to diversify our revenue streams and ensure the perceived value of membership remains high.

Strategic Priorities

1. Create a Collaborative Business Ecosystem for Red Deer & District

Foster a collaborative business ecosystem to elevate central Albertas's status as a hub for entrepreneurial success.

Goals

- Finalize the proposal to move from "concept" to business case and engage the business community.
- Develop and launch a business concierge service within one year, providing guidance and "way-finding" to legal, HR, licensing, and other business support services.
- Engage 15% of the membership in using the concierge service within the first year of launch, increasing by 10% each year for the next 2 years.
- Achieve a 85% satisfaction rate among members using the concierge service, as measured by follow-up surveys.

2. Increase the Value & Benefits of a Chamber Membership

Ensure the Chamber remains attractive to current and prospective members, retaining and growing membership, focusing on diversifying events and marketing, enhancing digital offerings, and targeting underrepresented membership segments.

Goals

- Increase the number of active members by 10% each year, aiming for a total of 35% of all registered businesses in the region.
- Achieve a 30% increase in average event attendance.
- Increase overall member attendance at events, with a target of 50% of members attending at least one event per year.
- Implement post-event surveys with a target of 85% satisfaction rate among attendees.
- Ensure that at least 75% of all workshops, presentations, and relevant events are made available online/on-demand, with a minimum of 50% of members engaging with this online content at least once per year.
- Develop comprehensive organizational, membership, and events marketing plans as part of the annual business/operational plan
- Increase social media engagement (likes, shares, comments) by 25% annually.
- Boost website traffic by 50% over the next three years through SEO, content marketing, and digital resources (news, education, workshop library, job board, member-to-member discounts, etc.).
- Conduct annual sentiment testing to measure the awareness of the Chambers' activities, programs, and value proposition among non-member businesses, setting a baseline for future marketing goals.

3. Be a Catalyst for Significant Economic Growth in Central Alberta

Make central Alberta more attractive to the outside business community to drive economic growth.

Goals

- Advocate for a revitalized “arm’s length” economic development department and reduction in red tape.
- Establish a tracking system to monitor the implementation of policy recommendations, with quarterly reports to the chamber’s board and members.
- Establish a job placement service in collaboration with local businesses and employment agencies, with a goal of placing 500 job seekers in local jobs within three years.

4. Increase the Chamber’s Capacity to Influence and Lead

Increase and diversify revenue sources to sustain and invest in the Chamber’s growth and success.

Goals

- Achieve an annual revenue increase of 15% each year
- Ensure that the revenue from Agri-Trade makes up no more than 35% of the Chamber’s overall operating budget.
- Develop at least three new revenue streams to balance the Chamber’s income sources.

Implementation Plan

As a governance board, the Red Deer District Chamber Board of Directors does not have direct influence or input into the day-to-day operations of the Chamber. The primary responsibility for the execution and implementation of the strategic priorities falls to the CEO and the Chamber staff. It is the CEO's role to create a comprehensive business plan and operating budget that aligns with and supports the delivery of the strategic priorities, goals, and objectives set forth by the Board.

Development of Business Plan & Budget

The CEO will develop a detailed business plan that outlines the specific actions, timelines, and resources required to achieve the strategic priorities.

An operating budget will be prepared to ensure the necessary financial resources are allocated to support the implementation of the strategic plan.

Execution & Operations

The Chamber staff, under the leadership of the CEO, will execute the business plan, implementing the strategies and initiatives necessary to meet the strategic objectives.

Regular operational activities will be adjusted as needed to ensure alignment with the strategic priorities.

Role of the Board of Directors

The Board will provide oversight to ensure that the strategic priorities are being addressed effectively.

Regular progress reports from the CEO will be reviewed, focusing on key performance indicators, milestones achieved, and any challenges encountered.

The Board will measure progress toward the goals and objectives, providing feedback and guidance upon request of the CEO to ensure successful outcomes.

The Board will establish a framework of accountability to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan. This framework will include monthly and quarterly reporting, annual performance reviews, and evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the strategies and initiatives.

Expertise & Support

The Board of Directors is comprised of individuals with significant expertise and experience in various fields. While the current culture at the Chamber is not conducive to receiving direct input from the Board, unless specifically requested by the CEO or staff, the Board remains available to provide their expertise and support as needed.

When requested, Board members will offer strategic insights, professional advice, and support to enhance the implementation efforts.

Ensuring Success

The successful implementation of the strategic plan relies on a transparent relationship between the Board and the CEO. While the Board provides strategic oversight and ensures accountability, the CEO and Chamber staff drive the plan's operational execution.

Regular communication and reporting will be key to maintaining alignment and addressing any issues promptly. The Board will continuously monitor progress, provide constructive feedback, and make necessary adjustments to ensure that the strategic priorities are met, and the Chamber continues to thrive and achieve its mission and vision.

This implementation plan reflects the Chamber's commitment to effective governance, strategic execution, and continuous improvement, ensuring that the goals and objectives outlined in the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan are successfully realized.

Performance Monitoring

The performance evaluation and monitoring of our strategic plan emphasizes the critical importance of establishing a robust reporting methodology that will enable both the Board of Directors and the Chamber membership to effectively evaluate progress towards the strategic goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

A consistent reporting framework is essential for providing clarity and accountability in our operations. It allows for regular, systematic assessment of our progress and ensures that we can make informed decisions based on reliable data. Establishing this framework is a priority for the Board, as it will ensure transparency with our members and facilitate continuous improvement in all areas of our activities.

Historically, the Chamber has relied on a mix of verbal, written, and data-driven reports from the CEO and Chamber staff. While these reports have been informative and generally effective, they have varied in format and presentation. This variability has made it challenging to track performance metrics consistently over time, particularly outside of financial metrics.

The absence of a standardized reporting framework has meant that it has not been possible to look back and evaluate various performance metrics in a consistent manner. This has limited our ability to make data-driven decisions based on historical trends and performance data.

Establishing the Reporting Framework

To address these challenges, the Board will prioritize the creation and implementation of a comprehensive reporting framework. This framework will:

- **Cover All Key Areas:** Include detailed reporting on events, membership, policy and advocacy, marketing, operations, finance, and progress towards strategic objectives.
- **Ensure Consistency:** Standardize the format and frequency of reports, ensuring that data is presented consistently from month to month and year to year.
- **Facilitate Historical Analysis:** Allow future boards to rely on the historical context of the reporting framework to make informed decisions and track long-term progress.
- **Enhance Transparency:** Provide clear, objective data that the Board and membership can use to evaluate performance and hold the organization accountable.

Implementation

The Board, in collaboration with the CEO, will be responsible for developing the specific metrics and data points to be included in the reporting framework. This will involve identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to each area of focus and ensuring that the necessary data collection processes are in place.

The Board will review and approve the proposed reporting framework, ensuring that it aligns with our strategic priorities and provides the necessary insights to monitor progress effectively.

Regular Reporting

Once implemented, the reporting framework will be used to provide regular updates to the Board:

- **Monthly Reports:** Include key metrics and performance data for ongoing monitoring.
- **Quarterly Reports:** Provide a more detailed analysis of trends and progress toward strategic objectives.
- **Annual Reports:** Summarize the year's performance, highlighting achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement.

By establishing a consistent and comprehensive reporting framework, we will ensure that the Board and Chamber membership have the information needed to evaluate our performance accurately and make informed decisions. This initiative will enhance transparency, facilitate long-term planning, and support the continuous improvement of our organization.