



# **HART COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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**STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025**

Prepared by the Kentucky League of Cities  
Community and Economic Development Team

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# Introduction

In spring 2022, the Board of Directors of the Hart County Chamber of Commerce moved to create a strategic plan and contracted with the Kentucky League of Cities Community and Economic Development (KLC CED) team to facilitate the planning process. A preliminary survey was used to ascertain from the board members their accomplishments, concerns, and goals thus far. A summary of responses in addition to a list of common themes was provided to the executive director prior to the facilitation meeting with the board of directors that was held on Tuesday, June 14, 2022.

Using that input, KLC CED staff drafted a list of common themes for the board to review and discuss during that facilitation meeting.

The board preliminarily reviewed the draft and refined their priorities and goals to guide them over the next three years. Board members reviewed the draft and then provided final updates and revisions on Sept. 15, 2022, and adopted the final strategic plan on that same day.



# Background

The Hart County Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1986 for the purpose of advancing the commercial, agricultural, industrial, cultural, and civic interests of Hart County and its trade area. Chamber members represent a diversified group of individuals and businesses working together to build a better future for the citizens of Hart County. The chamber serves as a central organization dedicated to the welfare and development of our local communities.

The chamber board has recently undergone changes to its board, having had three board members depart and adding three new board members. In addition, a new executive director was hired and came on board in summer 2021.

With all of these personnel changes, the executive director and chamber board recognized the need for a strategic plan to be more effective as a board and to better communicate with its members and the community.

The Hart County Chamber of Commerce has over 220 members, which is significant considering the small size and population of Hart County compared to larger communities across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The chamber's goals and objectives for the strategic plan are to have more awareness and presence in the community and to be the hub of information for Hart County by working with the business community to attract and retain businesses and by standing together.





# The Chamber's Mission, Vision, and Goals

## MISSION

Providing leadership and resources toward the progress and general welfare of Hart Countians through promoting businesses, economic and workforce development, agriculture, and education.

## VISION

To expand, improve, and promote positive actions through leadership that strengthens our community and enriches our lives, so we may thrive, prosper, and progress; not only for today, but for future generations.

## GOALS

1. Promote business development in Hart County
2. Distribute information to promote sustainable business practices
3. Seek future commercial, industrial, small business, and agriculture enterprises to forward economic development
4. Support businesses and community through application of workforce development strategies and programs
5. Advocate and support sustainable agriculture
6. Encourage tourism



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# Committees of the Chamber Board

**AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE:** Responsible for coordinating activities that showcase the importance of agriculture to Hart County and increase awareness among the farming community about new opportunities.

**AMBASSADOR'S CLUB:** Serves as an important link between the chamber and its members, and in so doing will seek to inform members about chamber activities, identify concerns members have about the chamber, and helps keep businesses abreast of the latest developments in the area of community growth and opportunity.

## **BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**COMMITTEE:** Focuses on increasing value to our members by better serving their needs, supporting their interests, and providing a forum for advice and interaction. Also works to enhance business development and expansion through programs, services, and educational opportunities.

## **COMMUNICATION & ORGANIZATIONAL**

**DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:** Explores ways to effectively communicate the Chamber story – its mission, goals, programs, and activities – to both members and the general public, as well as to identify ways to generate new membership and retention of existing members.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:**

Addresses needs in the community to help ensure Hart County stays on a path of progress.

## **EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**COMMITTEE:** Works with government, business, and education leaders to expand workforce development programs, retain talented graduates, help the county gain Work Ready designation, and assist employers in finding skilled workers as well as other workforce-related issues.

**Nomination Committee** – Identifies potential new board directors as needed and proposes slate of officers/directors in preparation of annual meeting.

**Awards Committee** – Helps select recipients of Teacher of the Year Awards and annual Chamber Awards.

**Publication Committee** – Helps coordinate the creation of the 2022 Hart County map.

**Finance Committee** – Consists of Executive Committee (President, Past President, V. President, Treasurer, Executive Director).

**Fundraising** – Helps to identify potential fundraising activities and coordinates implementation of those deemed feasible.

**Special Events** – Helps coordinate details for annual meeting, chamber luncheons, and other special events, including identifying potential speakers and sponsors, determining theme and door prizes, assisting with decorations, and other details as needed.



# 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

## Common Themes from Board Survey

Prior to the meeting held on June 14, 2022, the KLC CED team conducted an informal survey of the members of the board to gather their thoughts and ideas about the current status of the chamber's activities and its future needs. From the survey and the discussion at the board of director's meeting, the following themes emerged. The board of directors want to focus on board member development, membership development and community outreach. A summary of those results follows below. The KLC CED team created a three-year strategic plan based upon the board's input.

### **Community Outreach**

- Maintaining an updated website
- Grow membership through consistent and meaningful outreach activities and events
- Communicate more effectively with our community

### **Board Member Development**

- How to be effective as a board member
- Education on "tell our story"
- How to implement the Strategic Plan
- Training on how to use social media more effectively
- Roles, duties, and responsibilities
- Learn to embrace and accept change

### **Membership Development**

- Networking opportunities
- Marketing/more effective advertising on how the chamber can help
- Grow relationship with Tourism Commission
- Communicate more effectively with our members
- Explore opportunities to support internships, externships, apprenticeships, evening educational classes
- Awareness, educating, training, recognition

# 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

## Board Member Development

Goal: To help the board of directors be more effective as board members serving the chamber's members and the business community.

Action	Assignment	Projected Year to Complete
A. Training and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct onboarding training for new members.</li> <li>• Conduct refresher training for seasoned members.</li> <li>• Conduct board member skills inventory and match their skills with strategic plan tasks.</li> <li>• Reach out to other chambers and professionals to access their trainings.</li> <li>• Learn basic fund-raising skills.</li> </ul>	Executive Director	2024
B. Commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend all board meetings.</li> <li>• Attend chamber sponsored community events.</li> <li>• Participate in all chamber sponsored ribbon cutting ceremonies.</li> <li>• Attend at least one chamber related training per year.</li> <li>• Actively participate in and attend an annual membership drive.</li> <li>• Reorganize/restructure board's duties and term length.</li> </ul>	Recognized by Executive Director reporting to Executive Committee	Ongoing
C. Learning how to "Tell Our Story" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to explain the value of being a chamber member.</li> <li>• Create a list of best practices and accomplishments either on a business card or brochure handout.</li> <li>• Compose and practice your chamber elevator pitch.</li> </ul>	Executive Director	2023
D. Recruit and Develop New Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with the schools to mentor students and young adults for leadership opportunities within the business community.</li> <li>• Recruit and invite new members to be involved with the board. Use this as a training ground to recruit and develop new board members.</li> <li>• Create a pipeline of succession for the board.</li> <li>• Revitalize Leadership Hart County and Teen Leadership.</li> </ul>	Create new Leadership Committee to oversee this	ASAP

# 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

## Membership Development

Goal: Grow the number of active members to promote business in the community and advocate on behalf of our businesses.

Action	Assignment	Projected Year to Complete
A. Conduct Annual Membership Drive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate a board member as chair of the membership drive.</li> <li>Assign 5 businesses a year for each board member to contact in person and team up with chamber ambassador to visit these businesses together.</li> </ul>	Executive Director to provide a list of all businesses and work with the chair of the board to divide the list among the board members.	Ongoing
B. Evaluate Return on Investment of Current Chamber Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend shrinking core priorities and focus on implementing those priorities.</li> <li>Transition newsletters to electronic copy only.</li> <li>Host more effective events that reach more businesses.</li> </ul>	Executive Director	2023
C. Networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Business Buddy Program.</li> <li>Host themed quarterly luncheons with guest speakers from different industries.</li> <li>Teach members the chamber's elevator pitch.</li> <li>Partner with neighboring chambers of commerce.</li> <li>Host a chamber of commerce exchange with other chambers.</li> </ul>	Special Events Committee and Chamber Ambassadors	
D. Assessment of Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a stop, start, continue evaluation of all chamber activities and publications.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of being a chamber member.</li> <li>Value of the chamber's touch points and publications.</li> <li>Value of the newsletter.</li> <li>Effectiveness of other chamber materials.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Conduct a survey for members to provide feedback on the value of being a chamber member.</li> <li>Conduct a survey for members to provide feedback on the value of the different touch points and publications.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness of sending out a newsletter.</li> <li>Effectiveness of sending out other chamber materials.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Determine the most effective way to reach members – hard copy newsletter, social media, face to face, word of mouth.</li> </ul>	Membership Committee	
E. Promote Businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide workforce development sessions.</li> <li>Develop a business retention program.</li> <li>Showcase business of the week or month.</li> <li>Promote businesses working together.</li> <li>Raise awareness within the community of all businesses – both large and small.</li> </ul>	Executive Committee and Office Staff	

# 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

## Community Outreach

Goal: Grow membership through consistent and meaningful outreach activities and events.  
Communicate more effectively with the community.

Action	Assignment	Projected Year to Complete
A. Partner with Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit and develop new business leaders for students through internships and apprenticeships.</li> <li>Develop a Career Center.</li> <li>Provide evening business classes for adults.</li> <li>Host a career day for students.</li> </ul>	Education and Workforce Committee	
B. Educate the public about benefits of the chamber to the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create business card or handout that includes what the chamber has done and give to board members to hand out when visiting businesses.</li> <li>Keep chamber website updated and turn it into an information resource - include a job board, news, local updates, relevant studies, and helpful resources and tools.</li> <li>Create more presence on social media - Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook.</li> </ul>	Social Media Contractor and Office Staff	
C. Business Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with Small Business Administration to provide training on how to start a business.</li> <li>Collaborate with a downtown property owner to encourage a business incubator in Munfordville, Horse Cave, and Bonnieville.</li> <li>Work with local elected officials to create a business incentives package.</li> <li>Collaborate more closely with the Industrial Authority to strengthen the relationship.</li> </ul>	Business and Economic Development Committee	

\*\*\*Review status of each goal and update plan as needed\*\*\*

## Partnership, Cooperation and Support Functions

Partnering with and supporting the other community organizations leading the efforts in addressing:

- Options for attracting affordable housing options for Hart County, including the elderly population.
- WorkReady status for Hart County.
- A needs assessment to identify barriers to workforce participation, including childcare, adult day care and transportation.





# Conclusion

To realize success in this planning process, the board of directors and executive director must continually refer to the plan, set agenda items related to these priorities at regular board meetings, and assign tasks to individuals for completion and implementation. By connecting goals to the budget, establishing timelines, and reviewing the plans quarterly or semiannually and creating accountability for the implantation of the plan, the board will be successful in accomplishing its goals.

## Measures of Success

The measure of success will be demonstrated by the implementation of the action steps set forth in the chamber's strategic plan.

The board of directors and executive director should go over the plan at each board meeting and check off the tasks as they are completed. In addition, the board of directors and executive director should conduct an annual work session and develop a list of accomplishments of the past year and priorities for the coming year. The timeframe of the annual review will be May during the fiscal year calendar.

With diligent work, the Hart County Chamber of Commerce is poised to fulfill its mission of being a unified voice and hub of information for its members and the business community.

# Appendix A

## Hart County Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan Preparation Questionnaire

### 1. What does the Hart County Chamber of Commerce do? (Please provide one broad statement of purpose, and then describe it in more detail.)

- Supports and promotes the community through workforce and economic development.
- Make the community a better place for everyone. To bring in more higher-paying jobs, better education for our kids, local events to bring our community together, support our businesses and help them grow.
- The chamber is to promote and bring business into the county. At the same time assist the businesses with available chamber resources. Following the chamber will promote the business by advertising.
- Helps create a better Hart County by assisting businesses and other organizations.
- The CoC helps promote local businesses in Hart County to succeed by offering resources, services, and cooperation.
- The Hart County Chamber of Commerce facilitates the growth and retention of business in the county as well as spearheading projects to improve the quality of life for Hart County residents and creating a cohesive, unified community vision.
- We provide networking, small business and large business support, community involvement, and are a hub for county information.
- The HC Chamber of Commerce promotes and supports local businesses for the betterment of Hart County.

### 2. How does the Hart County Chamber of Commerce do these things?

- Ribbon cuttings, small business support systems, involvement, core donation of events, promotions, etc.
- By keeping up with the job market and enticing new industries to come to our town. This provides jobs, growth, helps the economy, and provides more opportunities to keep our kids here after they graduate from college.
- The Hart County Chamber of Commerce website, social media, newsletters. By having a diverse group of board of directors and ambassadors.
- By providing resources to the various members and helping promote these members.
- We encourage businesses to be a part of the organization because of the great benefits of a united effort. We promote through our communications via our website, radio spots, celebrating grand openings and ribbon cuttings, being a voice in Frankfort just to name a few.
- By hosting business ribbon cuttings, facilitating community projects, and being a centralized point of contact for community happenings.
- Through facilitating relationships with over 200 businesses and organizations, working closely with our schools, donating time and money for the betterment of our community, and promoting our county.
- Awareness, educating, training, recognition.

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## 3. What should the Hart County Chamber of Commerce be doing that it is not currently doing?

- I would like to see us explore opportunities to support internships, externships, apprenticeships.
- I would like to see more evening educational classes offered to adults to help them improve their skills so they would be qualified for certain types of jobs, or even help them to increase their skills at their current job.
- This is being done; however, we need to be following up with new and current members to ensure that they are fully aware of all benefits provided by the chamber.
- Focus on doing fewer things better.
- At the moment, I cannot think of anything else.
- By spearheading (or partnering with other entities to spearhead) an overarching County Strategic Plan. Identifying challenges, both to businesses and individuals and creating solutions to those problems. By creating a unified community plan, including marketing, tourism, county and city officials, industrial partners, etc. the entire county can move forward with one vision and cohesive goals.
- More outreach and networking. With more staff, this would be possible.
- A hotline or online assistant to find a local business for \_\_\_\_\_.

## 4. What do I value about the Hart County Chamber of Commerce?

- The professionalism and equality among members.
- The chamber reaches out to the community to help in any situation. They provide information, resources, connections to help new companies get started, or current businesses to grow. They strive to help in all aspects of economic development, growth, and for the betterment of our community.
- The community involvement.
- Its willingness to help any Hart County or member business to the greatest extent possible.
- I value the vision and mission of the chamber to promote the much good and all the benefits that Hart County has to offer. I value the relationships between all the chamber members and the board of directors that I am a part of.
- The chamber can, and does, fill so many needs within the county and is able to stretch their resources to make things happen. The chamber is a driving force behind positive change in the community.
- That our chamber is more grass roots and community focused than many of those in larger counties. We are close to our businesses, low cost, and are always ready to help promote and educate.
- The commitment and passion in helping local business and Hart County citizens thrive and succeed.

# Appendix A

## 5. What do I want to accomplish during my term on the board? What are my short- and long-term goals for the Hart County Chamber of Commerce?

- Internships both short- and long-term goal.
- I would have to give this more thought before answering.
- To be an available resource to the chamber for the potential growth of Hart County. Short-term goals are to attend more ribbon cuttings and to learn more about the businesses to determine their potential needs. Long-term goals are to increase the chamber membership.
- Provide sound guidance and involve more people in the community.
- To continue helping the chamber to be healthy and thriving. This in turn will make our businesses be successful. I think we need to stress the value of networking that the chamber has to offer our businesses.
- Short-term goal: Have the chamber of commerce create a strategic plan, with regular updates and work plans. Long-term - I would love to see the chamber's strategic plan dovetail into a county-wide strategic plan, including goals for the industrial authority, tourism, cities, communities, with concrete, achievable work plan initiatives in addition to regular day-to-day work and for those strategic plans to be re-visited and updated regularly. I would love to see the chamber and the county as a whole be proactive with upcoming changes, instead of reactive once a problem is identified.
- I would like to see a board with more active members and more inclusive to change and new ideas. Short-term, let's grow the benefits of membership or maybe diversify the types of memberships provided. Long-term, create more outgoing and involved relationships with our large and small businesses and trim the items out that are no longer economically needed. Farming

has really dropped off and industry has grown. Small businesses are also growing so we need to make changes to our programs that reflect that.

- Build on the foundation that was started, make improvements, and leave it in a strong position.

## 6. Are there any programs or services that the Hart County Chamber of Commerce should expand? Scale back? New services to consider doing?

- I can't think of any.
- Any kind of educational programs for young and older adults is always an asset for them and the businesses.
- To expand more on the Amish directory by reaching out to those businesses that were spotlighted in the directory to potentially obtain new membership.
- Ascertain small business and industry needs and expectations from the chamber.
- Since I am fairly new, I have a question. Have we had a practice of meeting quarterly for a breakfast or luncheon and having a guest speaker talk to us about issues related to a subject that is of interest to chamber members? I am a member of the Cave City Chamber of Commerce, and it has been a practice of having a breakfast at the Cave City Convention Center and having a guest speaker (sometimes two if they have a shorter presentation) Just wondering if that is something that might be of interest.
- The chamber should look at their entire body of work and sincerely evaluate ROI for all community work. Doing something because we've always done it, doesn't necessarily mean it is a worthwhile endeavor. i.e. Is a printed magazine still worth the time, effort and money invested? What does the chamber/community gain from the printed magazine? How active

# Appendix A

are the chamber ambassadors? Can we reinvigorate that program somehow? Leadership Hart County. Is participation high enough to continue the program? Can the program be reinvigorated?

- See above. I didn't realize this question was coming. I think a 'social media' membership is something we might consider. This would include training on how to use social media the most effectively and more advertising there. We also should try to promote more family membership but with the Chamber Foundation (our 501c3) I feel this will happen.
- Not that I can think of.

## 7. What is the most common complaint you hear about the Hart County Chamber of Commerce? How can it be remedied?

- N/A
- Mainly just from people that don't really understand what the chamber does or the impact it makes in our community. Find a way to help educate these people on what the chamber does and has to offer.
- Recently a complaint was they only hear anything from the chamber when asking for a donation. More advertising about how the chamber can help the businesses in the county.
- I don't hear complaints about the chamber.
- I have not heard any.
- "What do they do? How does the chamber benefit me?" We have to control the narrative around the chamber, just as we do for any number of entities like it. We need to tell our story more often, in a more positive light and in more places. That and the 'North and South of the River' narrative has to be banished, along with the East/West divide in the county. It's such an old story, but people still cling to it.

- They don't hear from us enough. More staffing and time communication can remedy this.
- Not enough is done to promote our youth in agricultural. Could also apply to all youth. Promote an entrepreneur contest?

## 8. In my opinion, the three most important things the Hart County Chamber of Commerce must focus on in the next two to three years are:

- Developing and promoting opportunities that are coming with Blue Oval in Glendale.
- Bringing in new businesses/help the small businesses to grow/education.
- The growth of new membership, showing appreciation to the existing members, and having an updated website.
- Strengthen partnerships with industry; Recruit and involve more people in working for the betterment of Hart County; Utilize social media more to highlight successes in Hart County.
- 1. Growing the membership by keep sharing the benefits of the chamber 2. Focus on how the chamber can help our business and community. 3. Keeping the chamber visible in the eyes of our community and not allow our legislators to forget about Hart County.
- Anticipating and controlling expansion due to economic development projects in the region. Education - A long, hard look at the state of education in our county. Not only from a standardized testing perspective, but from a healthy community standpoint. The un- and under-employed population in the county and mitigating that problem.
- Membership, networking, updated events for the times.
- Membership; board members, leadership.



# Appendix A

## 9. What other ideas, thoughts, or comments, if any, would you like to share?

- Respondent skipped this question.
- Respondent skipped this question.
- I am excited to see what the chamber will accomplish in the next three years.
- None.
- Respondent skipped this question.
- All of the strategic planning and thinking and work in the world is useless unless leaders in the community are willing to commit the resources and work needed to make goals and objectives happen. Once the strategic plan is completed, we MUST give the chamber staff adequate resources to complete their goals.
- We need an active board who is invested in our community. The ENTIRE community. The days of hierarchy and 'better than' are behind us and we need a board who reflects that mindset.
- None at this time.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

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