KCCE Chamber Certification Program

Application

2/1/2017

The Certified Chamber of Commerce Program promotes public awareness of the intent of the chamber of commerce brand as a non-profit community development based business membership organization by providing a peer review process of generally accepted chamber of commerce organizational benchmarks.

KCCE Chamber Certification Program Application

Introduction

As the professional development organization for chamber leaders in Kentucky, KCCE has developed the Chamber Certification Program. The only program of its kind in the Commonwealth, the certification program has three purposes. First, it defines standards of excellence for chambers throughout the state. Through the application process, it also provides chambers an opportunity to review and improve business practices as well as programs that benefit members. Lastly, KCCE certification distinguishes chambers that are doing it right as strong, effective leaders in Kentucky's business community.

KCCE Chamber Certification is a prestigious designation only open to KCCE members. Certification is earned through a comprehensive and rigorous review of chamber's business practices and programs.

Application Process

The Chamber Certification Program standards are high, and not all chambers will qualify for certification. Applicants are encouraged to review the entire application and the required documentation to determine if their chambers are prepared to apply. This is designed to be a technical certification to help prevent internal damage. Chambers may apply with the intent of having a review team assist them with suggested best practices, feedback and areas of improvement.

The KCCE Certification Committee, which includes a cross section of experienced chamber professionals, reviews and scores all applications based on defined standards. The committee will approve applications for certification and provide feedback and suggestions for improvements to chambers not approved for certification.

Applications must be complete. The Certification Committee will not score applications with unanswered questions or missing documentation. **If a chamber does not use a practice or program addressed in the application, the applicant must explain why the chamber has not adopted that particular practice or does not provide that particular member service. Simply leaving that section of the application blank or marking it N/A will void the application.**

Any chamber that is a member of KCCE and accredited through the U.S. Chamber is exempt from all application requirements with proof of accreditation.

Point System

The certification program is based on a point system. Chambers earn zero to three points for each program or documented business practice addressed in the application. For certification, a chamber must **earn 95 points** in recognition of their sound business practices and true leadership among chambers in Kentucky.

Unless otherwise noted, the following scale will be used.
- **0 pts: Does not participate:** The chamber earns zero points for an item if the chamber does not have the program or documentation requested. If the chamber does not have an item

requested, an explanation on why from the chamber's governing body is included. If the item is blank, the application is invalid. A chamber can also receive a zero if they previously applied but did not address concerns from prior application.

- **1 pt: Needs Improvement:** The chamber receives one point for each program or documented practice that needs improvement. A chamber can receive one point for having a plan in place to address a need. The plan should have a specific deadline.
- **2 pts: Meets Expectations:** The chamber receives two points for each program or documented practice that meets the defined KCCE standard.
- **3 pts: Exceeds Expectations:** The chamber receives three points for programs or documented practices that exceed the defined standard. Chambers with programs and practices awarded three points may be asked to share with other chambers throughout the year.

The standard set for earning two points represents sound business practices and the expectations of KCCE for a well run chamber of commerce. Chambers only receive three points for programs and practices that are innovative and go well beyond the normal expectations of an effective chamber.

Certification

The certification is valid for five years. Certified chambers should reapply in the 5th year of certification to ensure no lapse in certification.

Submission Timeline

The deadline to submit applications is **March 31**. Applications must be received in the KCCE office by 5:00 p.m. EST on this date.

Newly certified chambers will be recognized and presented a Certified Chamber of Commerce plaque during the awards ceremony at the KCCE annual conference. In addition, a marketing packet is provided to assist the chamber in using certification designation as an effective marketing tool in recruitment efforts.

Application

The information must be completed in its entirety for certification; however, no points are awarded for information on this page.

Chamber Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address: Website:

Contact Name: Title:

Payment

Application fee must accompany the application. Application fee is non-refundable under any circumstance and payment of the fee does not guarantee certification.
The application fee is $250 for KCCE members in good standing.
The application fee for US Chamber accredited chambers is $150 for KCCE members in good standing.

| | **Credit Card** | Number: | | Exp: |

CVV: Signature:

Billing Address:

| | **Check** | Check number: |

Please make check payable to KCCE and send via mail.

Supporting Information

Paid Full-time
Executive: [ ] Yes   [ ] No

Number of Employees on Staff: _____ Full-time _____ Part-time

_____ **Check here if US Chamber accredited. Please submit proof & payment. No further action is needed.**

Mandatory Items Check-list

The following items are mandatory requirements to apply for certification. Please take a moment to ensure that these items are included.

- ☐ Complete application sheet above
- ☐ Articles of Incorporation
- ☐ Bylaws
- ☐ IRS Letter of Determination
- ☐ Form 990
- ☐ Mission Statement & Use
- ☐ Annual Budget
- ☐ Fee submitted
- ☐ KCCE member in good standing

Documentation: Kentucky Certified Chamber Program

Please submit five (5) copies via notebook or one (1) via the online process

If a chamber does not use a practice or program addressed in the application, the applicant must explain why the chamber has not adopted that particular practice or does not provide that particular member service. Simply leaving that section of the application blank or marking it N/A will void the application.

Please note that sections should be divided and noted with a heading page and included with the hardcopies or uploaded accordingly. The more indications you provide will make it easier for the judges to understand what you are submitting.

Status (check one)
Enclosed   Not Available

Section I – Governance & Legal Documents

Chambers of commerce are defined as:

"Chamber of commerce" means a voluntary membership, dues-paying organization of business and professional persons dedicated, as stated in the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the organization, to improving the economic climate and business development of the community, area, or region in which the organization is located…

1. **Articles of Incorporation**: Mandatory requirement.   _____   _____

2. **Bylaws**: Mandatory requirement.   _____   _____

3. **Copies of IRS documents**: Mandatory requirement.
   a. Letter of determination   _____   _____
   b. Most recent Form 990   _____   _____

4. **Board Leadership manual/handbook (you may provide entire manual with these sections indicated)**
   a. Process and documentation for selection of board
      and officers (not what is in bylaws)   _____   _____
   b. Describe board of directors orientation process   _____   _____
   c. Describe the process used to evaluate Board Member
      performance (attendance, participation, etc)   _____   _____

     d.   Describe how Board expectations are communicated   _____   _____

     e.   Board roster   _____   _____

     f.   Board member Job Description & Commitment Form   _____   _____

     g.   IRS policy section: should include the following

         i.   Conflict of interest   _____   _____

         ii.   Whistleblower   _____   _____

         iii.   Document retention and destruction   _____   _____

5. **The three most recent board agendas and corresponding minutes with a description of the process for developing the agenda and the meeting frequency.**   _____   _____

6. **Operational Policies & Procedures** (These are the day to day operations procedures, policies adopted by the board that may include, but not limited to endorsements, material distribution, member list distribution, etc.)   _____   _____

7. **Describe the role of your executive committee and how often they meet**   _____   _____

Section II – Strategic Direction

Strategic planning and utilization of that plan are instrumental in the long term success and health of an organization. It is not enough to go through the exercise of creating a strategic annual plan; that plan must be ingrained into the organization. Staff and members should clearly understand the mission and plan for the organization and understand how he or she fits into that plan. This provides more value to the members and to the staff. Staff members who feel they truly impact the direction of the organization are more likely to be effective and satisfied with the job which will translate into better customer service.

1. **Mission statement and use**: Mandatory requirement.   _____   _____

2. **Current strategic plan/business plan/action plan/program of work and use, implementation and integration of the plan into the organization.**   _____   _____

Section III – Financial & Risk Management

As a significant resource for the business community, it is paramount that the organization has proper policies and procedures in place to protect the financial assets of the organization and to appropriately guard against potential threats to the long term sustainability of the organization. As such, KCCE feels items like insurance, financial policies and procedures, external financial oversight and emergency preparedness are essential to chambers of commerce. In addition, it is important that the leadership of the chamber understand key performance indicators and make appropriate changes to respond to those indicators in the best interest of the organization.

1. **Insurance coverage:**

     i.   General liability   _____   _____

     ii.   Workers compensation   _____   _____

     iii.   D & O   _____   _____

2. **Current budget.** Mandatory requirement   _____   _____

3. **Three-year trend of budget vs. actual.** _____   _____

4. **Third party financial oversight:** Minimum requirement is an annual compilation with a review the year prior to certification. The scale for this item is as follows: _____   _____
   - 0 pts – Annual compilation with a review the year prior to certification or recertification.
   - 1 pt – Annual review with a review or audit in the year prior to certification
   - 2 pts – Alternating review and audit
   - 3 pts – Annual audit

5. **Most recent profit and loss statement, balance sheet and process (who/how) for reporting to board** _____   _____

6. **Financial policies and procedures manual** _____   _____

7. **Emergency Preparedness Plan** _____   _____

8. **Crisis Communications Plan** _____   _____

Section IV – Administration & Staffing

Staff management protects the organization from liabilities related to employment law and sets standards and expectations for staff. Consistancy leads to more satisfied staff which translates into success for the organization. Basing these items on the strategic plan ensure the best possibility of meeting the vision and goals of the plan.

1. **List of current staff members and job descriptions/duties** _____   _____

2. **Employee manual and personnel policies** _____   _____

3. **Staff performance evaluations template** _____   _____

4. **CEO's performance evaluation from the board template** _____   _____

5. **Professional development plan and past 12 month's**

   Documentation _____   _____

6. **List of any industry/job certifications received by staff** _____   _____

7. **List of staff community service involvement** _____   _____

8. **Organizational chart** _____   _____

Section V – Membership Services

As a membership organization, the services chambers provide to the members are the core to the success of the organization. We encourage chambers to understand the individual market and the specific needs of the members in the service area. It is important think outside the box and to continue

to evolve to meet the needs of the businesses in the market. More points are given for those who are evolving to meet the needs and continue to be relevant.

1. **Market knowledge**
   a. Description of service area   _____   _____
   b. Provide information on your market penetration   _____   _____

2. **Membership application**
   a. Current application/brochure   _____   _____
   b. Dues investment schedule with number of members   _____   _____
      at each level

3. **Membership trends**
   a. Statistical data for three years   _____   _____

4. **Retention plan**
   a. Retention plan   _____   _____
      (indicate what has been accomplished)

5. **Directory and Database**
   a. Sample of latest membership directory   _____   _____
      (hardcopy or link to website)
   b. Describe your program to maintain/update
      member information   _____   _____

6. **Member Value Creation**
   a. Value statement (the value of your membership)   _____   _____
   b. Member testimonials   _____   _____

7. **Non-dues Revenue Generation (revenue generated,   _____   _____
   participation percentage, budget vs actual, etc)**
   Describe your program(s), how they impact your members and
   how they impact your bottom line. Show this data.

8. **Programs/Events/Services**
   a. Provide description of three programs each   _____   _____
      including what it is, why you do it and how you measure success
   b. Provide results from these programs and services   _____   _____
      from the past 24 months

9. **Member communications**
   a. Communications plan and examples (such as mail,   _____   _____
      newsletter, email, and social media)
   b. Communications results (open rate, percent of   _____   _____
      members connected via social media, email bounce
      back rates, unsubscribe percentages, ROI on mailings, etc.

10. **Media Relations:**
    a. Provide sample news releases and submit samples   _____   _____
       of media coverage. Include cut sheet and/or web page

printout with date and time stamp (maximum of six samples)

11. Economic Development
   a. Chamber's role in economic development   _____   _____
   Unless your chamber is also the EDA, all chambers participate in basic economic development in a community. Explain how your programs & benefits help increase the bottom line for your members, this participating in the overall economic development of your service area.

12. Government Affairs
   a. Chamber's government affairs activity   _____   _____
   b. Provide your legislative platform and describe in detail
   the most recent and successful campaigns   _____   _____
   (max of three within 24 months.

13. Technology   **_____**   **_____**
   a. Describe technology that you currently use and your plan for enhancement. Examples include: text message marketing, database, APPS, website enhancements such as videos and blogging, operational technology that streamlines efficiency.

14. Accomplishments   _____   _____
   a. List three accomplishments that you are most excited about