



Forward, Together | A Framework for Our Future

Executive Summary

The Columbia Chamber has undergone a series of significant adjustments to strengthen its operations and build capabilities for the future. In early 2017, the Chamber convened nearly 100 regional stakeholders at two Foresight Labs to discuss and debate the trends most likely to impact the region's future and ask, "How can we be ready for the future, and what's the Chamber's role?"

The participants at the Chamber's Foresight Labs concluded that the Columbia Chamber has an important role to play in the region's future prosperity. The results of the Labs were prioritized by the Chamber's Executive Committee, and detailed by a Steering Committee comprised of Foresight Lab participants in collaboration with a team of professional futurists. The Columbia Chamber will utilize the strategic priorities listed below as a framework to guide the organization into the future.

Strategic Priorities

1. Engage in Building Consensus Around a Shared Vision for the Future
 - Actively connect with regional stakeholders to execute on the priorities identified through the Chamber's Strategic Foresight process, helping put the Midlands on the map in a cohesive and integrated manner.
 - Seek out opportunities to convene stakeholders for collaboration to address specific regional issues.
2. Elect and Engage Proactive and Responsive Leaders with a Focus on Accountability and Transparency
 - Create a political action committee representing the interests of the region's business community.
 - Design and implement reporting tools, in partnership with other Chambers in the region, that educate the business community on how elected officials have voted on issues impacting their businesses.
 - Reinforce the grassroots advocacy efforts to wield greater influence on public policy issues affecting the business community.
3. Create a Pipeline to Develop Business Leaders into Strong Community Leaders
 - Create a public leadership program.
 - Empower the Leadership Columbia Alumni Association to strengthen the connectivity between its members and the Chamber, specifically engaging in new ways to develop a more capable bench of talent for the region.



4. Guide and Influence Issues to Foster a Favorable Environment for Business
 - 🔥 Continue to advocate for transparency and accountability as statewide initiatives and key infrastructure legislation are reviewed, discussed, passed, and implemented.
 - 🔥 Explore public private partnerships (P3) as a means to fund infrastructure projects. The World Bank, Price Waterhouse Cooper, and others have excellent resources to assist the region in considering these alternatives.
 - 🔥 Educate the business community on the effects and unintended consequences of issues that impact the cost of doing business in the region.

Strategic Priorities the Chamber Supports

The following strategic priorities are important to our region's future, but are not priorities that the Chamber can be a leading catalyst on at this time.

1. Diversifying the economy beyond the "Big 3"
 - 🔥 *How can we ensure planned growth that benefits the entire region?*
2. Innovation
 - 🔥 *How can we capitalize on and scale the investments, ideas, and talent already being generated by USC, Aflac, IBM, and others?*
3. Engaged Citizenship
 - 🔥 *How can we give residents, especially those who may be otherwise overlooked, a way to plug in and make a difference in the community's future?*
4. Attracting and Retaining Millennials
 - 🔥 *How can we offer the jobs, resources, and quality of life that millennials seek?*
5. USC
 - 🔥 *How can we ensure that strategic partnerships with USC, and other institutions of higher education in the region, are a core focus of a broader economic development strategy?*
6. Military
 - 🔥 *How can we encourage the Military community to remain connected with the growth of our region?*

Your Chamber of the Future

Collaboration between local governmental entities, business, and other stakeholders was a consistent theme at the Chamber's Foresight Labs. But collaboration doesn't just happen; someone needs to step up and orchestrate, making the connections that count and convening the stakeholders to make a difference. Chamber Foresight Lab participants determined that *connecting and convening* is a perfect role for the Columbia Chamber. The Chamber is prepared to engage in its role as connector and convener, and execute its strategic priorities to move our region *forward, together*.