



BUSINESS PLAN 2019 - 2022

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Black Country Chambers Business Plan for 2019 – 2022.

This plan represents the results of two years of hard work by our chamber employees and board members that has seen our business completely redesigned. We have looked closely at what we do and how we do it and we feel we have a business model that is member focused and financially sustainable. We have made some tough decisions and some brave investments that has allowed us to agree a business plan that will deliver year on year growth in membership numbers and revenue.

We believe that Chambers of Commerce are an essential component of the local business community and we take this responsibility very seriously. We are committed to supporting our businesses to grow, to learn new skills and find new markets. We have put our members at the centre of our decision-making processes and we will work closely with all the other business support agencies to make sure we all achieve the same goal – a strong and prosperous Black Country economy.

The next three years will present some big challenges for businesses and those that are ready for these challenges will be the ones most likely to succeed. They will need to employ more skilled young people and upskill their existing staff, they will need to invest in new products and new ways of doing things, they will need to be flexible and have a wider supply chain and customer base, they will need to invest in their leadership and management skills and they will need to shout loudly when things are holding them back.

We have developed a package of membership levels, services and networks that will help businesses do all this. We will campaign tirelessly to help them succeed and we will raise the profile of the Black Country and its businesses at every opportunity we get.

Corin Crane

CEO, Black Country Chamber of Commerce

1. About the Chamber

Black Country Chamber of Commerce (BCCC) exists to help its member businesses grow. We do this by bringing businesses together, helping them find new customers, explore new ways of working and make sure the right people know when they are being held back or they are doing something amazing.

BCCC now employs 31 members of staff that offer a range of services to businesses - from Export Documents, Trade Support, account management, events, awards, training and networking opportunities. Most of these staff are employed permanently through general funds, but we also have contracts with the Department of International Trade (DIT), the Careers Enterprise Company and the University of Wolverhampton/ Unsung Hero to offer bespoke support services. We work in partnership with the other 5 Chambers of Commerce across the West Midlands to deliver the DIT contract through an LLP and at a policy level, we work closely with Greater Birmingham & Solihull and Coventry & Warwickshire Chambers on Combined Authority and Elected Mayoral activity.

Importantly, being a member of your local Chamber of Commerce makes you part of a huge global movement. Across the country, there is over 90,000 Chamber of Commerce members employing over 5m people across 53 Chambers. Overseas there is a British Chamber in 33 Countries from Chile to Cambodia. Wherever you need to trade and whatever you want to sell - we'll know someone who can help, whether that's in the UK or anywhere in the world.

We believe in the strength and brilliance of the Black Country and we support all those groups that are striving to make the area even better. We are a strategic partner on a wide range of local groups including the Black Country Growth Hub, Sandwell Business Ambassadors, Dudley Business Champions, LEPs Competitiveness Board, University of Wolverhampton Business School's Advisory Board, WMCA Mayors Business Advisory Group and Brexit Advisory Group.

We are governed by a board of 10 directors who, except for the CEO, President and Vice President, serve a maximum of two 4-year terms with 2 directors standing for re-election every November at the annual AGM. We have an active policy group that supports the CEO on policy development and key campaigns.

2. Strategic Vision and Values

Our Strategic Vision is:

To provide first-class support to businesses across the Black Country, to be a voice for them on important issues and to create a sense of belonging to the wider chamber movement.

BCCC is a trustworthy voice for Black Country business and helps thousands of companies - of every size and sector - to grow and thrive. We will also work to bridge the gap between the world of education and the world of work, helping businesses find the talent they need and boosting the career prospects of young people.

For over 150 years, our business has been helping Black Country businesses grow.

The Chambers values are:

- **To always support belonging and gathering:** We will bring businesses together to help them grow through new commercial opportunities and to create a common voice on local issues;
- **To always communicate clearly and effectively to our members, partners and each other:** To help us adapt and grow in a fast-changing social environment we will embrace new ways of communication to allow effective feedback from businesses and to help us customise new support products;
- **To be creative, risk-takers and brilliant problem solvers:** We will embrace a 'can-do' attitude and lead local partnerships with a positive approach to working together;
- **To be leaders in diversity and inclusivity:** Both as a business and in a proactive approach to work with members that reflect the ethnic and cultural communities that drive the local economy and develop programmes to engage with young entrepreneurs and enterprises;
- **To put our people first:** Our staff are our greatest asset and wherever possible we will help them develop and drive the business forward. When we recruit, we will promote inclusivity and aim to employ the best candidates through first-class recruitment processes; and
- **To take pride in achievements:** Of our local businesses and members, of our local partners and of our team members

3. Business Planning Principles

This business plan is for the period 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2022 and will be refreshed annually.

All the Chamber's activity must deliver one or more of these main objectives:

- i) To increase the return on investment of membership to members
- ii) Raise engagement levels and commercial opportunities with non-members
- iii) Raise the profile of the BCCC regionally and nationally
- iv) To be a commercially sustainable business

It has been developed following some key principles:

- a) **Using staff input at its core** – from planning days, 1:1's and discussion sessions.
- b) By following the idea of **becoming a 'modern chamber'**, with our structure, digital presence, the demography of membership, partnerships, use of evidence and building a wide network of expertise.
- c) Putting **first-class communications** at the heart of everything we do – speaking to businesses and representing their views.
- d) To deliver best practice in **openness and transparency**, from decision making, member involvement at every level, best use of funds and ensuring Value for Money
- e) **Doing fewer things, better** – through focused campaigns, a clearer membership model and a focus on quality rather than quantity with our membership approach.
- f) **Being a leader in business partnerships** – whether they are local, national or international. Leading local partnerships and putting businesses first and aligning ourselves where possible to British Chamber of Commerce activity
- g) To **optimise chamber assets** – human resources, capital and financial Assets
- h) To be **commercially focused** in everything we do

4. BCCC Goals

Over the next three years, the Chamber will focus on six high-level goals that will increase membership, profile and commercial revenue. These are:

1. To grow Chamber numbers year on year in both paid and digital memberships and ensure a high level of member retention.
2. To make the chamber financially sustainable and develop a range of services and commercial opportunities based on local business needs.
3. To put businesses at the heart of our Chamber and to represent these businesses at a local, regional, national and international level
4. Raise the profile of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and its members to business, media and stakeholder communities.
5. Bridge the gap between the world of education and the world of work, helping businesses find the talent they need and boosting the career prospects of young people.
6. To support and develop our staff and establish a modern and flexible working environment.

Goal 1 To grow Chamber numbers year on year in both paid and digital memberships and ensure a high level of member retention.

Our focus will always be to grow the size and scope of our membership. The Black Country has an incredibly diverse business base and Chambers represent businesses of all sizes from all sectors. However, as important as the scale of our membership is our ability to offer them a first-class service that is financially sustainable. All our membership work is costed in detail and the level of membership that businesses commit to will relate to the breadth of their membership offer. Our commitment to excellence will apply no matter what level of membership businesses join us at.

In this business plan, we make many new commitments to achieve this vision. We will launch a wide range of **Sectoral Focused Memberships** including Visit Black Country, Future Link, Start Up Business Club, a new schools offer and a fresh approach to our work with charities and the third sector.

We expect to **increase our membership numbers** in all our existing packages, but this plan is based primarily on growth in our higher levels of memberships. Our focus won't be purely on recruitment, businesses will need to see the value of our offer and not be pressured into membership, so our aim is to have some of the best **retention rates** in the country. A lot of our members, especially those smaller businesses, join us to increase the number of **business to business leads** they get, so we will be launching a range of networking clubs that will run regularly and be delivered across the Black Country. We will also launch our own network of **Business Mentors** that will primarily look to support our Business Start Up members, but we will eventually aim to roll this out to all businesses in need of a mentor.

We appreciate that not all local businesses will want to join full membership but may still want to be kept up to date on our work, may want to sponsor individual events or use some of our commercial products. On this basis, we will look to grow our digital membership numbers and deliver our **Digital Strategy** to make sure we communicate quickly and to the right people in whatever is the best route.

Goal 1: KPIs

- 1.1 Membership Revenue
- 1.2 Retention Rates
- 1.3 Membership Numbers

Goal 2 To make the chamber financially sustainable and develop a range of services and commercial opportunities based on local business needs.

We have made a lot of changes over the past 2 years to make the Chamber financially sustainable. We now have a financial model that will run at a surplus, but that does not depend on government or external grants to do this. We will still seek to bid for and run **externally funded programmes**, but they will be run as standalone projects.

The increase in our brand awareness and profile has meant that we have been able to confidently develop numerous **Sponsorship and Partnership Opportunities** that will help fund our campaigns and events. We will also add to our portfolio of **commercial products** with support or services that businesses ask for through our new diagnostic tool the **risk dashboard**.

We will launch a new prospectus for businesses to access our new **training offer**. Part of this will be the development of a new **Executive Training** package that will build on the success of our Strategic Leadership Course with products aimed at CEOs, MD's, Directors and Chairs.

We will launch **Black Country International** which will roll up our existing work through Export Documentation, Department for International Trade and Brexit Support and bring in new products, training and documentation services that local businesses need during the coming years of change during and after Brexit.

Goal 2: KPIs

- 2.1 Revenue from Commercial Activity
- 2.2 Training Offer Revenue
- 2.3 Achieve projected annual budget

Goal 3 To put businesses at the heart of our Chamber and to represent these businesses at a local, regional, national and international level.

We take member representation and our internal governance very seriously and it is essential to any modern membership organisation that their members' voices are properly heard at every level. We have taken our member feedback on board and will focus both on how we communicate with our members, but also on how they help guide us as a business.

This year we will complete our **governance review** that was started last year with the separation of the Chair and Presidents roles. This part of the governance review will be led by the Chair and will make recommendations on the make-up and role of the board and on the creation of a policy **Think Tank** that will replace the existing consultative forum. This will be chaired by the acting president and members to this group will be voted on at AGM alongside board members.

The Think Tank will also oversee the development of the **Chamber Manifesto** based on real business issues that all members will get a chance to influence through the completion of the **Quarterly Economic Survey (QES)**.

Each of our new sector-focused memberships will also be governed by a small group of local members – covering construction forums, tourism, Future Link, manufacturing and transport forums. These groups will be essential in making us focus on the right issues and the right membership offer.

Brexit will continue to be an issue for local businesses for the duration of this business plan, and we will continue to offer a comprehensive support package and seek appropriate funding whenever this becomes available.

Goal 3: KPIs

3.1 QES Numbers

3.2 Complete 100% Manifesto Commitments

Goal 4 Raise the profile of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and its members to business, media and stakeholder communities.

We are incredibly proud to be a central part of the Black Country business community which is one of the strongest, most diverse and dynamic in the country. Everything we do as a Chamber should contribute to raising the profile of the area and our members.

We are committed to doing this in style and we will professionalise our marketing, branding, events and communications. We will conduct a **brand refresh** in summer 2019 which will set us apart from the competition and enable us to engage confidently and proudly to all our audiences. This refresh will kick start a big investment in our marketing and communications activity, which is already growing at a steady pace.

This May will see the second **Black Country Business Festival** which has quickly become the region's major annual business event and we plan to build on last year's successful launch with more attendees, higher levels of profile and an increase in revenue. The size and scope of the festival will grow each year of this business plan as we aim to be the biggest and best in the country.

This business planning period will also see the re-launch of our **Prosper Magazine**. We have bought the design, printing and distribution of this magazine back in-house and we will be launching an ambitious and business focused magazine this autumn. We have now bought all our sales and advertising back into our control which importantly means that no other agencies will approach our customers to sell them products in our name, we will also appoint a new telesales operative to lead on all this new sales work.

Goal 4: KPIs

- 4.1 Database registrations
- 4.2 Individuals engaged
- 4.3 Survey target for "positive impact on business"

Goal 5 Bridge the gap between the world of education and the world of work, helping businesses find the talent they need, and boosting the career prospects of young people.

There is no greater strategic imperative in the Black Country than matching skilled, enthusiastic and work-ready young people with jobs in our local businesses. Less foreign workers, an ageing workforce, new technologies and underinvestment in skills by local employers are just some of the reasons for our increasing skills gap. Despite so many of our employers wanting more young people in their workforce and so many of our schools looking to work with more employers to make sure their curriculum is fit for purpose, we still are having little impact on these figures.

We will continue to grow our offer to schools and our support to businesses to address their skills gaps each year of this business plan. We will continue to be a central partner of the very successful **Careers Enterprise Company's Enterprise Adviser Network** which will run until August 2020. We will also continue to grow our excellent **Young Chamber** increasing the number of pupils engaged each year but also addressing the need to raise an appropriate level of revenue for the programme to be sustainable long term. The **Careers Speed Networking** event will now become an annual fixture with more schools than ever taking part.

We will pilot and then launch a new **Schools Membership Offer** that will offer a business focused package that will support schools achieve their Gatsby Benchmarks and Ofsted inspections. This new offer will be priced at a commercially sustainable rate and will include support to develop a school committee, leadership skills, access to a library of 'Talking Heads' videos from local businesses, live video assembly's from local business leaders and business projects linked to the national curriculum.

Goal 5: KPIs

5.1 Pupils engaged in Young Chamber

5.2 Revenue targets for new Schools Membership Offer

Goal 6 To support and develop our staff and establish a modern and flexible working environment.

With our restructure completed, we are now budgeted for a fully operational team. This business planning period will see the conclusion of three externally funded contracts with the Dept. for International Trade, Careers Enterprise Company and MOD Contract's all coming to a conclusion in years 2 and 3 and decisions on next steps will be taken at the appropriate stage.

We now want to support and grow the skills of our existing workforce in the best way we can and develop a working environment that is flexible, relaxed and business focused. We will procure external support to help manage our **training and development needs** across the business, but staff will also be able to access our in-house training courses that we will be running for businesses. We will look to develop an excellent **staff benefits package** that will include a credit union saving scheme, a healthcare package, a cycle to work scheme and a profit-related bonus scheme.

We will encourage staff to source and take up mentoring support from relevant professionals and give them time off to take this offer up. We are committed to continuing our annual staff satisfaction survey each year and present results and actions to the board and staff.

Goal 6: KPI

6.1 Increase NPS score year on year