# FACP Chamber Certification Program

## Application

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.

# Contents

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## Introduction

Chambers of commerce were formed historically by groups of individual business owners joining together to change or influence an issue in the community. Through time, chambers evolved into organizations that meet the many needs of businesses. By becoming a certified chamber of commerce, chambers are recognized for sound business practices and for providing responsible and innovative programs to benefit the membership. FACP is the professional development organization for Florida chamber professionals. As such, it is our responsibility to guide chamber leaders and support each other.

## Criteria

The FACP Chamber Certification Program is voluntary. Any Chamber that is accredited through the US Chamber of Commerce is exempt from all application requirements with proof of accreditation. Only chambers that have been a member of FACP for at least one (1) year and have a paid, full-time executive may apply. Application does not guarantee awarding of Certification status. Certification is based on information provided in the application and is a recognition designation. FACP is not endorsing the chamber in any legal manner and is not liable for the actions of any certified or uncertified chamber.

## Certification Process

The Certified Chamber of Commerce Program sets standards of excellence for chambers in Florida. The certification is based on a scoring system. The certification judicial committee represents a cross section of experienced chamber professionals who review the applications and score based on the defined criteria. The judicial committee presents the scores to the FACP President and marks each applicant as "Approved" or "Suggest Improvement." The FACP President will provide feedback to the applicant, upon request. Because the standards are high, not all chambers meet criteria for certification.

Chambers submitting for certification must answer **every** question. If the chamber chooses not to have a particular program or document, the chamber must provide the policy or explanation for why the organization does not have the document or provide the service to members. **Applications which include items without any documentation or marked as N/A without an explanation are considered incomplete and will not be scored for certification.**

## Point System

The certification program is based on a point system. This point system is 0-3 with the following criteria for each. All items contain a standard to define meeting expectations (a score of 2). Some items contain criteria for one or more of the other numbers on the scale. 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.

- **1 pt: Needs Improvement:** The chamber receives one point for items which the chamber has a program or documentation addressing the requirement but the item needs improvement. Items earn 1 point if the organization has a program and provides documentation, but does NOT meet the minimum standard of 2 points.
- **2 pts: Meets Expectations:** The chamber receives 2 points for items which the chamber provides documentation that meets expectations.
- **3 pts: Exceeds Expectations:** The chamber receives 3 points for documentation of items that are exceptionally innovative or above expectations. Chambers with items scored as 3 points may be asked to share the program with other chambers throughout the year as a best practice. If there is a specific requirement to earn 3 points, it is noted in the information.

Please remember that the scale for certification is based on meeting expectations (2 points). The criteria set for earning a 2 points for each item represents sound business practices and the expectations of FACP for a well run chamber of commerce. Please consider a score of 3 points as extra credit. Chambers only receive a score of 3 points for items that are innovative and go well beyond the normal expectations of an effective chamber. These are chambers FACP would consider asking to share a program as a best practice from which other chambers can learn.

## Certification
For certification, the chamber must achieve a minimum of 78 points. A chamber achieving greater than 86 points is a Certified Plus chamber denoting it as an organization with sound business practices and a true leader among chambers in our state.

The certification is valid for five years. Certified chambers should reapply prior to the expiration of their certification to ensure that there is no lapse in certification.

## Submission Timeline
The deadline to submit applications is June 15 (no applications are accepted after this date). Panels of at least three judges review and score each application.

Newly certified chambers are recognized during the FACP annual conference at the annual awards ceremony, including a presentation of a Certified or Certified Plus Chamber of Commerce plaque. In addition, a marketing kit (logo and press release) is available to assist the chamber in utilizing certification designation as an effective marketing tool.

# Application

The information on this page is for statistical classification only.  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**

All fees must accompany the application. <u>Application fees are non-refundable under any circumstance and payment of the fee does not guarantee certification.</u> The application fee is $300.

[ ] **Credit Card**   Number: _____   Exp: _____

CVV: _____   Signature:

_____

Billing Address: _____

[ ] **Check**   Check number: _____

Please make check payable to FACP and send via mail.

**Supporting Information**

[ ]   [ ]

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

Office Space: [ ] Own   [ ] Rent _____ Approx. Sq Ft

Population of area served: _____

Geographic description of
area served: _____

Total Annual Operating Budget: $ _____

Average Dues per Member: $ _____

Dues Schedule:
(Attach copy)   Min: $ _____   Max: $ _____

Number of Paying Members:     Companies _____     Other _____

## 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*
- ☐ Sample Meeting Agenda/Minutes
- ☐ Annual Budget
- ☐ Financial Review by a third party (CPA) of the prior year financials
- ☐ Fees Submitted
- ☐ FACP Member in Good Standing for a Minimum of One Year
- ☐ Paid Full-Time Executive

> *except for chambers exempt by Florida Statute 501.973. Exempt chamber will provide most recent tax return.

Are each of the above items included?     _____ Yes          _____ No

> If you checked "No,"your application will not be accepted as it does not meet the minimum requirements.

## Section I – Governance & Legal Documents

Chambers of commerce are defined by Florida Statute 501.973:

> *"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  item.

2. **Bylaws**:  Mandatory item.

3. **Copies of IRS documents**:  Mandatory item.
    a. Letter of determination*
    b. Most recent Form 990*
       *except for chambers exempt by Florida Statute 501.973. Exempt chamber will provide most recent tax return.

4. **Board Leadership manual/handbook**
    a. Process and documentation for selection and installation of officers.
    b. Board roster
    c. IRS policy section: should include the following

        i.      Conflict of interest
        i.      Whistleblower
       ii.     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.**

## 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 and annual plan; those plans 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. FACP believes the following criteria are fundamental to this concept.

1. **Mission statement and use**:  Mandatory item.
2. **Current strategic plan and use, implementation and integration of the plan into the organization.**
3. **Current business plan/action plan/program of work and describe reporting for the "state of the chamber" to members.**

## 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, FACP 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:** Mandatory item.  Should include the following:
   a.  D&O,
   b.  General Liability, including liquor (if applicable), volunteers, property (if applicable)

2. **Current budget and three-year trend of budget vs. actual.**

3. **Third party financial oversight:**  Minimum requirement is an annual Financial Compilation with a Financial Review the year prior to certification.  The scale for this item is as follows:
   > 0 pts – Annual Financial Compilation with a Financial Review the year prior to certification or recertification.
   > 1 pt – Annual Financial Review with a Financial Review or Financial Audit in the year prior to certification
   > 2 pts – Alternating Financial Review and Financial Audit annually
   > 3 pts – Annual Financial Audit

   All Financial Compilations, Financial Reviews and Financial Audits must be performed by an independent third party Certified Public Accountant.

4. **Most recent profit and loss statement, balance sheet and process for reporting to board**

5. **Financial policies and procedures manual**

6. **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

7. **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. **Current staff members and job descriptions**

2. **Employee manual and personnel policies**

3. **Staff performance evaluations template**

4. **CEO's performance evaluation template**

5. **Professional development policy and past 12 months' documentation**

6. **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 and collaboration**
   a. Description of service area: Mandatory item.
   b. Provide information on your market share: 0 or 2 points only
   c. List the other Chambers that are in your market.
   d. Describe your relationship with each (competitive, collaborative, no relationship, etc.).

2. **Membership application**
   a. Current application
   b. Dues investment schedule

3. **Membership trends**
   a. Statistical data for three years (include total number of members, number of new members, retention rate and growth rate)
   b. List the number of members at each level of membership

4. **Recruitment and Retention plans**
   a. Copy of recruitment plan
   b. Copy of retention plan


5. **Member Value Creation**
   a. Value statement
   b. Member testimonials


6. **Non-dues Revenue Generation**
   a. **Provide the percentage of the chamber's budget that is represented by non-dues revenue.**
   b. **List the percentages for each area of non-dues revenue (events, advertising, rental income, etc.)**


7. **Programs/Events/Services**
   a. Provide description of up to six programs, including what it is, why you do it and how you measure success
   b. Provide results/outcomes from programs listed above


8. **Member Communications**
   a. Communications plan and examples (such as mail, newsletter, email,text, 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.)


9. **Marketing/Branding Strategy and examples (maximum of six examples)**

10. **Media Relations:**
    a. Provide sample news releases within the past 24 months. .
    b. Provide samples of media coverage within the past 24 months.


11. **Economic Development and Government Affairs/Advocacy**
    a. Chamber's role in economic development
    b. Describe recent successes in economic development (max of three within 24 months)
    c. Chamber's role in government affairs/advocacy
    d. Provide your legislative agenda and describe in detail the most successful initiatives within the past 24 months (maximum of three examples).


12. **Technology**
    a. Describe the technology that you currently use (text message marketing, database, apps, website enhancements such as videos and blogging, operational technology that streamlines efficiency
    b. Describe your plan for enhancing your technology


13. **Accomplishments (one to three that you are most excited about and consider to be a best practice among chambers)** No points – but Mandatory item