

2023-2024

Annual Report

A Publication of the Mason City Chamber of Commerce

2023-2024 Year in Review

As we reflect on the 2023-2024 year, the Mason City Chamber of Commerce is proud of the progress made in advancing our mission to promote community and economic development for our members and the North Iowa region. Advocacy has been a key focus, ensuring the voices of North Iowa businesses are heard through our engagement with local, state, and federal representatives.

Our Child Care Works initiative addressed the urgent need for accessible child care, supporting working families and strengthening our workforce by ensuring reliable care options in the community.

Workforce attraction and retention remain top priorities. We are enhancing programs to recruit talent and support newcomers, while our leadership initiatives continue to develop the next generation of leaders for the region.

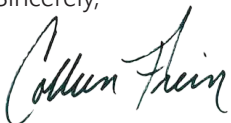
Creating a sense of belonging is vital for community growth. Our *Building CommUNITY* programming fosters inclusivity and supports employers' retention efforts, ensuring that our region is welcoming for all.

Our strategic goals—Advocacy, Workforce Development, Belonging, Partnerships, and Organizational Excellence—are essential for positioning North Iowa for success. The strength of our Board of Directors and dedicated committee members drives these initiatives forward.

Looking ahead, we're excited to implement new initiatives for 2024-2025, including transitioning to investment packages that offer tailored value to each of our members. We'll continue to grow our programs and expand our workforce attraction efforts.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to build a bright future for Mason City and North Iowa.

Sincerely,

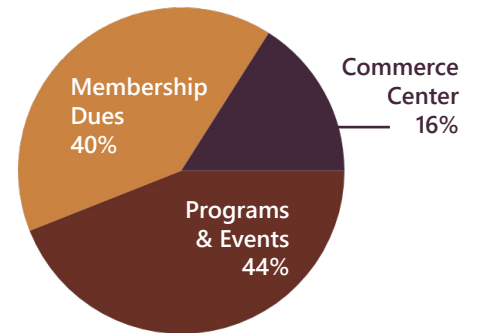


Colleen Frein, MBA, IOM
President & CEO
Mason City Chamber of Commerce

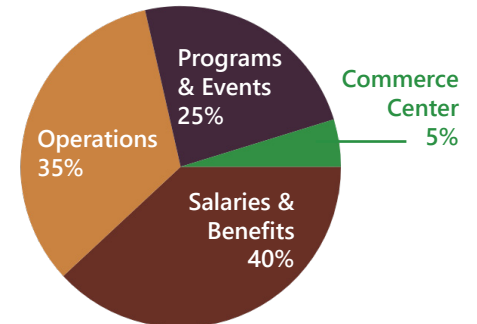


Member Investment

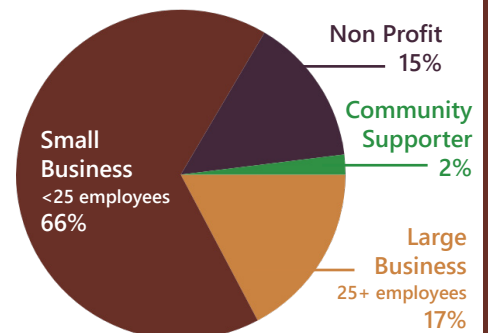
Total Revenue



Total Expense



Total Membership



2023-2024 Strategic Priorities Progress

Public Policy

Advocacy is at the heart of our work as a Chamber of Commerce. We advocate for our members at the local, state, and federal level on issues of importance to North Iowa businesses.

For the first time since 2016, the Chamber organized a delegation of 18 North Iowa leaders to attend the **North Iowa Fly-In**. During our trip to Washington, DC, we met with representatives from the USDA, Department of Transportation, Essential Air Service, and Union Pacific, along with all three Members of Congress.

Our region was also well-represented at the **North Iowa Day on the Hill**. The Chamber reserved the Capitol Rotunda for the day, and partner organizations lobbied on behalf of our community's priorities.

It's more important than ever that our members are well-informed on the issues. That's why we launched the **Chamber Advocate** in January. This weekly e-newsletter is published during the legislative session and keeps members updated on what's happening in Des Moines and why it matters to North Iowa.

Child Care Access is an issue impacting businesses, and finding a solution is paramount to ensuring a dependable workforce. That's why the Chamber partnered to launch the **Child Care Works** initiative. To date, we have utilized nearly \$350,000 in private donations to secure \$647,000 in state funds, allowing us to raise wages at all Cerro Gordo County child care centers by \$2/hour, increase staffing at all eight centers by 22% since January, and provide retention bonuses to after-school/summer programs and in-home providers.



Workforce

Attracting and retaining quality workers is paramount to North Iowa's economic stability and growth. The Chamber focuses much of its efforts on supporting our members' efforts in these areas.

Now in its eighth year, the **Community Concierge** service is a proven solution to attracting and retaining high-value employees. 69% of candidates who went through the service in 2023-2024 accepted offers and have moved, or are preparing to move, to North Iowa for their positions.

This year, the Chamber launched its **North Iowa Navigators** program. Our Navigators help guide newcomers to the region, supporting them with any questions they may have and helping them feel welcome and included.

The Chamber belongs to the Iowa Chamber Alliance (ICA), a statewide business lobbying group. This year, the Iowa Economic Development Authority tapped ICA members to launch its national talent attraction marketing campaign. We are utilizing our **This is North Iowa** platform to support this effort. So far, we have followed up with nearly 100 people who are interested in moving here!

Growing our workforce also means investing in our future and emerging leaders. That's why we are continuing to add to and grow our leadership programming, including **Leadership North Iowa** (Chamber member employees), **YIELD** (high school juniors), and **College Connections** (Chamber member college interns). Each of these programs is unique and caters to the needs of the participants, but is ultimately designed to build our workforce pipeline and showcase all North Iowa has to offer.

The Chamber added an annual **Leadership Workshop** to complement our Leadership North Iowa program. This event is open to any member employee and is a great refresher for Leadership North Iowa alumni.



Belonging

The Chamber understands that people need to feel a sense of inclusion and belonging if they are going to continue to reside in North Iowa. That is why we have designed our Building CommUNITY programming to engage with current and prospective workforce, while also supporting our employers' hiring and retention efforts.

An important part of belonging is feeling a sense of purpose. This year, we added a new session to Leadership North Iowa: **Volunteer Speed-Networking**. Participants had the chance to meet with many of our non-profit member organizations, learn about their mission, and find out how to volunteer or get involved. We plan to expand this to include all Chamber members in 2025!

We hosted bimonthly **Building CommUNITY** sessions this year, focused on a variety of subjects that matter to our business community. These included sessions on psychological safety, Juneteenth, and understanding the unhoused population.

When someone is considering a relocation to our region, they need to picture themselves here. That's why we have partnered with the North Iowa Corridor and Clear Lake Chamber on the **This is North Iowa** marketing campaign. Our marketing efforts aim to represent everyone in our region and relay the message that we are welcoming and inclusive.



Promoting Partnerships

We work better when we work together. We are championing regional, statewide, and national collaboration to better serve our members and position our region for success.

Each month, the Chamber organizes a **Monthly Partner Meeting**. This brings together our city, economic development, and educational leaders on a regular cadence to ensure we are all rowing in the same direction.

This year, the Chamber organized the first **Joint Board Social** with the Mason City Chamber, Clear Lake Chamber, and North Iowa Corridor. It's widely acknowledged that "breaking bread" is a crucial part of collaboration, and this gathering was a resounding success.

This spring, our President & CEO was invited to attend the U.S. Army War College National Security Summit and an Employer Engagement day with the Iowa Army National Guard. The impact of these opportunities was immeasurable and has resulted in renewed **Collaboration with Our Military**. Both our YIELD and Leadership North Iowa programs are including sessions with the Iowa Army National Guard at the 1133rd Headquarters in Mason City in 2024-2025.

Organizational Excellence

Your Chamber is widely recognized as one of the premier chambers in the nation. We are accredited with FIVE STARS by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and are the 2022 winner of the ACCE Chamber of the Year.

You can be confident that your investment in the Chamber is well-managed. We are in a **Strong Financial Position** and are increasing our investment in marketing our region and our members.

We are proud to show continued **Membership Growth**. The majority of our members (2/3rds) are small businesses with fewer than 10 employees. While we equally support members of all size, we are uniquely tuned into the needs of business owners in North Iowa and work hard to ensure you are well-represented on our Board of Directors.



Our **Program & Events** continue to grow in engagement. We are focused on ensuring return-on-investment for participants, sponsors, venues, and presenters.

In order to maintain a **High Level of Excellence**, it's essential that Chamber staff be knowledgeable about industry trends and pressing issues. Staff members not only attend state, regional, and national conferences, they're often called on to serve as presenters and moderators. They bring important tools and ideas back to ensure our Chamber is positioned to be a leader for our members.



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2024-2025 Organizational Goals

Transition to Investment Packages

In an effort to streamline membership investment and provide a higher value proposition to our members, the Board of Directors has approved a shift in how we structure membership investment. Instead of measuring your investment based on number of employees, you will have the opportunity to decide how much you want to invest in the Chamber according to the services you need and programs in which you want to participate. We will be meeting with each of our 650 members this year to share more information and ensure you are getting your expected return on your investment.

Program & Event Growth

The Chamber constantly strives to offer the best networking and educational programs and events for our members. We want to ensure that they are worth your time and investment. For the year ahead, our goal is to ensure we are providing the opportunities you want and need as a business owner, and that they are tailored to businesses of all sizes. Our Program Committee coordinates a healthy mix of events that promote leadership growth, networking opportunities, educational programs, and whenever possible, FUN!

Workforce Attraction/Retention Marketing

In the year ahead, we plan to expand on our workforce attraction/retention programs - including *Community Concierge*, *This is North Iowa*, and *Building CommUNITY* - and market them to a wider audience. This will be a growing part of our annual budget, but it is a necessary one if we want to grow our population and meet the increasing employment needs of our members.

The mission of the Mason City Chamber of Commerce is to promote progressive community and economic development to benefit Chamber members and the North Iowa region.