

Annual REPORT

— 2025-26 —



A Publication of the **Greater Mason City Chamber of Commerce**

From the Chairperson

didn't start this year expecting to serve as Chair of the Greater Mason City Chamber of Commerce.

When our Chairperson needed to step down, I was serving as Chair-Elect, so I stepped into the role a little earlier than planned. In construction, you learn pretty quickly that plans change, you adjust, and you keep the project moving. Apparently, Chamber leadership works about the same way.

What I gained from the experience was a much closer look at just how strong this organization really is.

This was a tremendous year for the Chamber, highlighted by being named Chamber of the Year. That recognition reflects the quality of our staff, the commitment of our board, the support of our members, and years of hard work to strengthen our business community.

I have been especially impressed by our Chamber team. They are always looking ahead, building partnerships, developing new ideas, and finding ways to turn plans into action. Our board is just as strong, with business and community leaders who give their time, ask good questions, and care deeply about where Mason City is headed.

This year also marked the first full year of work on our strategic plan, and the progress has been impressive. The Chamber has continued strengthening support for small businesses, creating stronger connections between businesses and government leaders, increasing membership value, and building momentum around pride in Mason City. These are big goals, and it has been rewarding to see how much progress has already been made.

Along the way, I traveled to Washington, D.C. for the North Iowa Fly-In, attended more Chamber programs and events than ever before, and somehow learned more about artificial intelligence than I ever thought I would. All of it gave me a better understanding of how much work happens behind the scenes and how many different ways the Chamber supports this community.

I was already a big supporter of the Chamber before this year. After seeing the work up close, I am an even bigger one.

Next year, I will have the opportunity to serve a full term as Chair, and I am looking forward to it. We have a strong plan, a strong team, and a strong board. My goal is simple: keep the momentum going, support the people doing the work, and stay focused on what matters most to our members and our community.

If this past year is any indication, it should be a good one.



2026-2027 Chairperson
Greater Mason City Chamber of Commerce



THE ROAD TO Chamber of the Year 2026

 ASSOCIATION OF
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EXECUTIVES

In 2026, the Greater Mason City Chamber of Commerce was named ACCE Chamber of the Year in Category 1, one of the highest honors a Chamber can receive.

The award recognizes more than a single program. ACCE evaluates the strength of the entire organization, including financial performance, member retention, governance, strategic planning, operations, communications, and measurable impact.

So, what helped set the Greater Mason City Chamber apart?

Child Care Works showed the Chamber's willingness to take on one of the region's biggest workforce challenges. The countywide initiative brought together employers, providers, educators, public partners, and families, helping improve staffing, expand access to care, reduce waiting lists, and bring more than \$1 million into the local child care system.

Leadership development remained another strength. **Leadership North Iowa** continues a tradition more than four decades strong, while **YIELD** introduces high school juniors to leadership and community involvement. Together, these programs are helping build the next generation of North Iowa leaders.

Advocacy became increasingly hands-on. Chamber leaders and members traveled to Washington, D.C. for the **North Iowa Fly-In**, while **North Iowa Day on the Hill** gave local leaders and the **Leadership North Iowa** class the opportunity to engage directly with state policymakers. The **National Civics Bee** extended that work to middle school students, encouraging civic participation at an early age.

The Chamber also looked closely at its own future. More than 120 members helped shape a new three-year strategic plan focused on Small Business Growth, Civic Engagement, Membership Value, and Inspiring a Shared Vision. That plan quickly moved from paper to action through new small business programming, a redesigned membership investment structure, stronger civic engagement, and community conversations about Mason City's future.

Together, these efforts told a clear story: the Greater Mason City Chamber combines strong operations with ambitious community leadership.

That combination of organizational strength, measurable impact, and a willingness to lead is what helped earn Mason City the title of 2026 ACCE Chamber of the Year. ■



Small Business Growth

Strategic Priority

The Chamber should provide specific programming and services to support small businesses in the ways that work for them.

Year 1

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Define what small business need through 1:1 board member meetings and roundtable focus groups



MEASURES OF PROGRESS

Complete

Develop programming and services requested by small businesses concerns



Programming:

- Small Business Roundtable
- Marketing Matters
- Small Business B(AI)sics

Services:

- Placer.AI

BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING 2026 REFINEMENTS

KEEP

Small Business B(AI)sics, Marketing Matters

CHANGE

Roundtable format, possibly industry-specific or less frequent

ADD

1:1 phone calls, SMS/text option for contacting members, surveys at events

Year 2

GOAL We will make life easier for our small business members by connecting them with practical information, resources, and relationships that address their specific needs.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Meet members where they're at by connecting 1:1



MEASURES OF PROGRESS

Increased engagement by members

Connect members to industry-specific peer groups information hub



Feedback from meeting attendees

Create a small business resource hub on masoncityia.com



Clicks/engagement on website analytics

Year 3

GOAL We will grow and retain small business membership and develop an interactive online resource hub for members.

Strategic Priority

The Chamber should act as a bridge between our businesses and our community leadership to promote efficiency and enable business growth.

Year 1

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Begin inviting city leadership or partner leadership to board meetings for updates
- Provide a list of upcoming meetings to the full membership to invite questions & concerns
- Launch a "questions and concerns" link for members
- Compile the top issue from the year, bring to city to provide solution

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- ➔ Complete
- ➔ Complete
- ➔ Advocacy Request Form launched on masoncityia.com
- ➔ City to add business communication page in Business Matters starting January 2027

BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING 2026 REFINEMENTS

KEEP

Monthly speakers at board meetings

CHANGE

Format to allow more time for Q&A from members and board members (provide questions in advance)

ADD

Article summary to our monthly newsletter. This will be written by a board member to share what they took from the discussion.

Year 2

GOAL We will help members understand issues, elections, and government decisions and develop priorities important to the business community.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Form a Government Affairs Committee
- Create an online election/candidate information hub

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- ➔ Committee formed and develops priorities
- ➔ Metrics of webpage

Year 3

GOAL We will strengthen the pipeline of informed, prepared candidates for public office through candidate education and resources that help employers navigate and support an employee's decision to run for office.

Civic Engagement



Strategic Priority

The Chamber should ensure members value their investment and understand the benefits of their membership.

Year 1

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Develop tools for members to understand and use their benefits

Hire Membership Director with strong relationship-building skillset

Evaluate membership tiers and benefit usage

MEASURES OF PROGRESS



Transitioning to quarterly billing & reminder cycles



Complete



Tiers reviewed and updated to strengthen value

BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING 2026 REFINEMENTS

KEEP

Focus on Relationships

CHANGE

Identify primary communicators

ADD

Emphasize how Tiers meet member needs

Year 2

GOAL We will work to ensure every Chamber member has an accurate primary representative who will be able to access their benefit tracker.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Quarterly communication on benefits

Ensure primary representative has access to Chamber Master and is receiving emails

Launch New Member Cohorts

MEASURES OF PROGRESS



Increased registrations and benefit usage in the month after email



Number of members who have a rep with access to CM



Percentage of new members from previous quarter invited to join

Year 3

GOAL We will grow membership benefit usage by 25% after acquiring baseline benefit usage in 2027.

Membership Value

Inspire a Shared Vision

Strategic Priority

The Chamber should establish and communicate a clear sense of community identity and pride that supports population growth and workforce needs.

Year 1

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Develop a community culture statement

Launch a community-wide marketing program with a complementary regional component

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

➡ Complete. *"In Mason City, we celebrate the history that grounds us, create a place where people choose to belong, and build for the future by thinking boldly and taking action."*

➡ Premiering at the 110th Annual Meeting

BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING 2026 REFINEMENTS

KEEP

Community Conversations

CHANGE

Create tangible takeaways and measurable outcomes for Year 3

ADD

Develop ways to put the Pride in Place campaign in the hands of everyone in our community

Year 2

GOAL We will help Mason Citians better understand, connect with, and take pride in their community by sharing its stories, strengths, opportunities, and identity.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Implement and promote the Community Culture Statement

Launch the Pride in Place Campaign

Transform Member News into a community storytelling hub

Develop a Community Day event

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

-----➡ Statement adopted and incorporated into community messaging

-----➡ Campaign launched and engagement tracked

-----➡ Increased stories highlighting local people, businesses, and community assets

-----➡ Event concept developed and partners engaged

Year 3

GOAL We will measure changes in community pride and belonging through a second Pride in Place Survey and expand the campaign through business, community, and regional partnerships.

