



WBA STRATEGY

2018-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR BACKGROUND

The Whatcom Business Alliance (WBA) was founded in April of 2012, as a non-partisan 501c(6), non-profit corporation, with the purpose of facilitating local business success, community prosperity and economic development while acting as an advocate for the Whatcom County business community on issues of importance, particularly relating to good public policy for business and economic development.

The WBA is governed by a Board of Directors composed exclusively of private-sector business leaders from a range of industries throughout Whatcom County. The WBA is led by the organization's President who oversees staff and day-to-day operations. The President reports directly to the WBA Board.

OUR VALUES

- Truth
- Respect
- Accountability
- Passion
- Education
- Integrity
- Optimism
- Community

OUR MISSION

The Whatcom Business Alliance is the ears, eyes and voice for the Whatcom County Business community. We believe business success is the single largest driver of community prosperity and focus our efforts on facilitating that success by encouraging, acknowledging and sharing best and ethical business practices, bringing business leaders together to improve their respective businesses, improve the business climate and work with local leaders to promote public policy that supports business health and a vibrant economy. We consistently connect local leaders, educate them on issues of importance and advocate on their behalf.

**Facilitating Business Success
and
Community Prosperity**

The WBA Is Your



For Policy Affecting Whatcom County Business

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LETTER from the PRESIDENT



In January 2018, at the direction of 2018-19 Board Chair Doug Thomas and the Executive Committee and with unanimous consent of the WBA Board of Directors, staff was directed to begin the process of developing an overall strategic plan for the WBA focused on priorities for the next five years.

The process began with a planning session on January 24, 2018 and was followed up with a second session on April 9 and a final session on July 9. In those sessions, WBA Critical Success Factors were identified; those are the areas of priority where the WBA will put a consistent focus in order to deliver on our mission. In addition, the group, at the di-

rection of the WBA Executive Committee, developed a committee structure that would focus on each of these areas.

Six Critical Success Factors:

- 1. Staff/Process Development**
- 2. WBA Board Engagement, Development & Good Governance**
- 3. WBA Business Continuity/Financial Stability**
- 4. Member Engagement/Communications**
- 5. Policy Research/Analysis/Education/Advocacy/Step Up**
- 6. Youth Engagement Initiative**

Identifying these key factors and allowing the Board, committee members and staff to weigh in on them provides staff with direction as it sets annual goals and budgets. It also allows the Board to more easily measure our accomplishments.

Each of these areas of focus gets direction and oversight from one of our five committees. The committee chair and assigned staff person of each committee reports back to the full Board.

The committee assignments are as follows:

1. Staff/Process Development
(Executive Committee)
2. WBA Board Engagement, Development & Good Governance
(Executive Committee)
3. WBA Business Continuity/Financial Stability
(Full WBA Board of Directors)
4. Member Engagement/Communications
(Member/Communications Committee)
5. Policy Research/Analysis/Education/Advocacy/Step Up
(Advocacy Committee)
6. Youth Engagement Initiative
(Youth Engagement Initiative Committee)

UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The following pages of this WBA Strategic Plan provide a more in-depth look into each of the areas the Board of Directors plans to focus on. It is a tool to help keep us focused on our priorities and a way to evaluate how we are doing, relative to our stated objectives.

It is not intended as a be-all-end-all and it does not limit us from taking on additional priorities or changing the priorities we've set at this point in time.

The expectation is that this Plan is the baseline for building and continuing our growth and keeping us accountable for the things we deem most important. It will be referred to on a regular basis and updated on an annual basis.

Six Critical Success Factors are identified in this plan. Each of these areas has committee and staff support. And each area has four sub-sections:

Overview

This is intended to remind us why this area is important and why we chose to focus on it.

Ultimate Vision

This is intended to paint a picture of what the WBA would look like if this area of priority was being executed in the way we envision it. If we are doing everything right, what is the result? It puts us in a position to say this is what we want—before asking, “now, how do we get there?”

Three Areas of Focus

Within each of the six Critical Success Factors, we have further identified the three most important things we should be focusing on in each of those areas to achieve success. It doesn't mean we can't do more, but these are the three deemed most important. This will keep us on track, or get us back on track if we wander away from the priorities.

Actions

We don't list goals in this Plan; rather, we will use it to set our annual WBA goals and budgets.

The list of actions in each of the Critical Success Factors came about through Board requests, committee-person input, and the strategic-planning process. It essentially is a list of things those connected with our organization believe we should do. It is not prioritized. That process will take place in-house and through the WBA Board.

STAFF AND PROCESS DEVELOPMENT

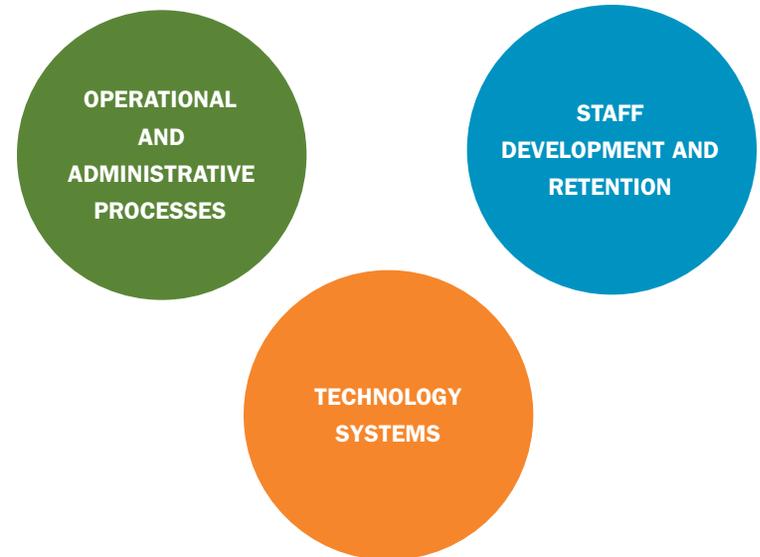
An organization is only as strong as the people working on its behalf. Staff development, retention and establishing internal processes that are easily learned, repeated and improved upon are vital for employee growth and opportunity. In a small organization with limited resources, this area often gets far less attention than necessary.

WBA Executive Committee Oversight and Direction

ULTIMATE VISION

The WBA staff shares the vision of making a positive difference in the Whatcom County business community by supporting business success and facilitating community prosperity. The work environment is positive and high energy. All staff understand their roles, expectations and opportunities. They feel appreciated because they receive positive and constructive feedback from the President and Board members on a regular basis. Employee retention is strong because the organization is growing, which creates opportunities for those willing to take on responsibility. The internal processes are developed for financial reporting, administration, membership, events and all other areas where efficiency is important, which makes it easier to add activities that bring value to WBA members.

3 KEY FOCUS AREAS



STAFF AND PROCESS DEVELOPMENT

ACTIONS

Operational and Administrative processes

- On-Boarding for Membership and Step Up
- Administrative Processes Developed
- Employee Handbook Developed

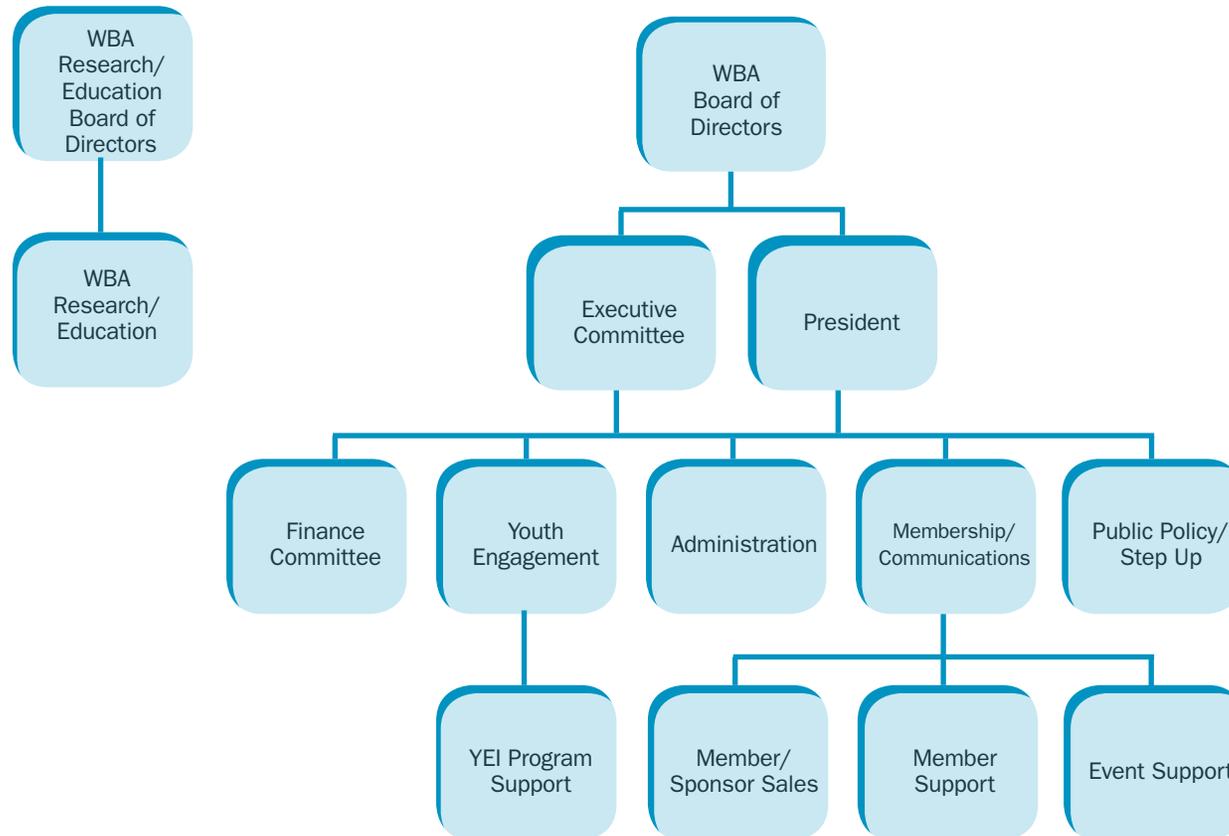
Staff Development and Retention

- Job Descriptions for All Staff Positions
- Plan for Annual Reviews
- Completion of Strategic Plan

Technology Systems

- Review of Technology Systems
- Complete Switch Over from Previous System
- Annual Review of All Technology

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Board	Company	Term	Exec Comm	Chair
Doug Thomas, <i>Chair</i>	Bellingham Cold Storage	2012-Jan 2021	2012-Present	2018-2019
Jane Carten, <i>Past Chair</i>	Saturna Capital Corp	2012-Jan 2021	2012-Present	2016-2017
John Huntley, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Mills Electric	2012-Jan 2021	2012-Present	2020-2021
Josh Turrell, <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>	Larson Gross PLLC	2018-Jan 2021	2018-Present	
Pam Brady, <i>At Large</i>	BP Cherry Point Refinery	2014-Jan 2020	2017-Present	
Tony Larson, <i>WBA President</i>	Whatcom Business Alliance	2012	2012-Present	

Board of Directors	Company	Term
Andy Enfield	Enfield Farms	2012-Jan 2020
Billy VanZanten	Western Refinery Services	2016-Jan 2019
Guy Jansen	Lynden Transport Inc.	2012-Jan 2019
Jeremy Carroll	Dawson Construction	2016-Jan 2019
Lynn Murphy	Puget Sound Energy	2017-Jan 2020
Josh Wright	Bell-Anderson Insurance	2016-Jan 2019
Becky Raney	Print & Copy Factory	2012-Jan 2019
Janelle Bruland	MSNW	2012-Jan 2020
Ken Bell	Best Recycling	2016-Jan 2019
Sandy Keathley	Formerly, K&K Industries	2012-Jan 2020
Tyler Byrd	Red Rokk Interactive	2016-Jan 2019
Ben Kinney	Keller Williams	2016-Jan 2019
Laura McKinney	Alcoa Intalco Works	2017-Jan 2020
Sarah Rothenbuhler	Birch Equipment	2016-Jan 2019
Tom Kenny	Formerly, WA Federal	2016-Jan 2019

BOARD ENGAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT & GOOD GOVERNANCE

The WBA impacts the business community by successfully growing revenues that support our services and programs. The WBA continues to cultivate a positive reputation and influence in the community. The WBA Board of Directors, with influence across every industry in Whatcom County, are the WBA's biggest advocates. The Board members are well informed about WBA activities and successes and are engaged in a way that sets an example for their peers and others in the business community.

The WBA has an ongoing development plan for current Board members and maintains a fraternity of former Board members so their influence continues even after their terms have been served. Good governance is essential for the WBA to set a good example in the economic-development and philanthropic arenas.

Executive Committee Oversight and Direction

ULTIMATE VISION

The WBA has built a reputation of attracting the most successful and respected business leaders to its Board of Directors from a diverse group of businesses of all sizes from all industries, each of whom has their own reputation for successfully operating with integrity within our broad industry base. The WBA Board of Directors is seen as the most influential and trusted business-advocacy Board in Washington state. They encourage their peers to join and participate in WBA activities because they believe in our mission and set the example by supporting the WBA with their time, resources and testimony.

The WBA Board of Directors has high expectations as it relates to code of conduct, core values and good governance. As a result, the WBA has developed standards and processes for good governance and ethics and holds itself accountable to those standards.

3 KEY FOCUS AREAS



BOARD ENGAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT & GOOD GOVERNANCE

ACTIONS

Board Engagement

- Process for Board Member Orientation with Chair and President
- Regular Board Programs to Encourage Better Attendance (Advocacy Committee)
- Board Engaged in Growth of Step Up, Membership and Sponsorships
- Board Actively Encouraging Peer Participation
- Consistent Process for Retiring Board Members
- Develop WBA Board Orientation and Expectation Manual, which includes:
 1. Mission Statement
 2. Background and WBA History
 3. Board Member Expectations
 4. Code of Conduct and Core Values
 5. Board Structure and Terms
 6. Meeting Schedule
 7. Events Calendar
 8. Organizational Chart
 9. Staff Positions Overview
 10. President's Job Description
 11. Bylaws
 12. Conflict of Interest Policy
 13. Whistleblower Policy
 14. Board and Past Board Member Directory
 15. Staff Directory
 16. Committee Overview and Directory
 17. Relationship to Business Pulse Magazine
 18. Current Membership List

Board Recruitment

- Set Proactive Process for Board Recruitment
- Identify Industry Categories Needed

Good Governance

- Encourage and Promote Active Committee Participation
- Develop Active Working Committees
- Consistent President Review Process
- Evaluate Internal Processes
- Evaluate Internal Technologies and Efficiencies

BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

Financial strength and stability is the lifeblood of WBA success and the key to our ability to continue to make a lasting positive impact on the local business climate. Unlike most economic development organizations, the WBA Board of Directors has vowed to be different by refusing to accept public funding for its efforts. The WBA always seeks to exceed member, sponsors and advocacy investor's expectations. Our strength and success is found in the ongoing participation and passion of the WBA Board of Directors.

Currently, our funding comes from the following areas:

1. Membership Revenues
2. Sponsorship Revenues
3. Step Up for Business Success Revenues

Finance Committee & Entire Board of Directors Oversight and Direction

ULTIMATE VISION

The WBA is financially strong and growing. Our Membership, Step Up and Sponsorship attrition is low because we consistently review our value proposition and adapt when necessary to exceed the expectations of our members. We have a substantial financial reserve set aside that will allow us flexibility when opportunities arise. Our Board participation is strong and because they believe in our mission, Board members continue to support the organization after their terms expire. The WBA keeps and provides complete, timely and accurate financial reporting to the Board of Directors and benefits greatly from the Board's vast business acumen, knowledge and feedback.

3 KEY FOCUS AREAS



BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

ACTIONS

Membership/Step Up Growth and Retention

- Engage Board of Directors in Membership Growth and Retention and Step Up Participation

Financial Management and Reporting

- Communicate Committee Budgets and Evaluate Based on Annual Priorities
- Review Risk Management and Make Recommendations to Board
- Financial Reporting to Board Breakdown
- Get Buy-In From Every Committee on the Importance of Our Critical Success Factors and Seek Input

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

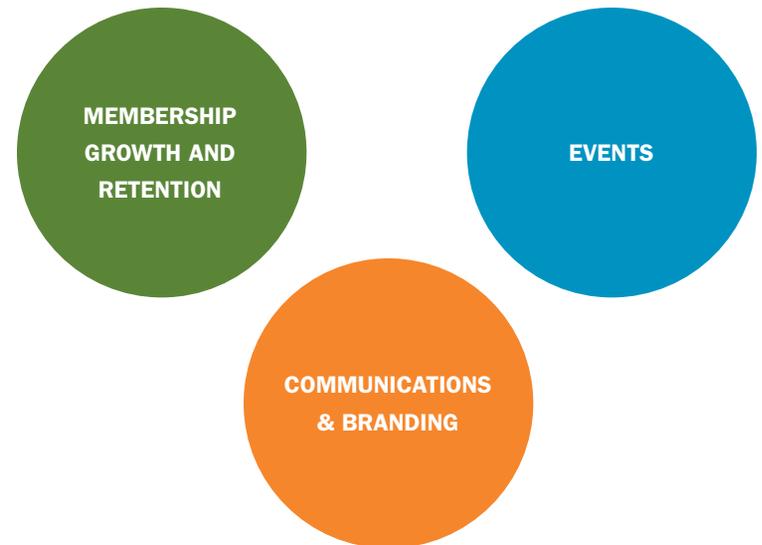
The WBA is first and foremost a member organization. Everything we do is designed to bring value to our members. As a result, focusing on continual attention on our member value proposition and how we communicate to our members is vitally important. Branding, Communications, Membership Growth and Retention and Events all fall under this area of importance.

Member/Communications Committee Oversight and Direction

ULTIMATE VISION

The WBA is the largest and most influential local business membership organization in Whatcom County. Membership is considered a must for all businesses who share WBA core values. WBA members are models for strong business ethics, best business practices, caring for employees and giving back to the community. Members share the WBA belief that aggregate business success is the key driver of a thriving community. The WBA continues to recruit new members because of their affinity for our purpose. WBA events are seen as the best-quality business events available locally and are well-attended and supported. WBA members are well-informed because the WBA consistently communicates fact-based information to them on matters relating to the WBA and on issues important to the community. Our communication is respectful and we always take the high road on issues that may be deemed controversial. The WBA is seen as an honest broker on issues of importance and are looked to for leadership on important business and economic issues. Members see us as an invaluable resource because we act as their eyes, ears and voice.

3 KEY FOCUS AREAS



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

ACTIONS

Membership Growth and Retention

- Update Mission Statement
- Build New Member Package
- Update Value Proposition
- Develop County-Wide Membership Drive Plan Including Events
- Grow the Member/Communications Committee as an Opportunity for Non-Board Member Engagement
- Create Board Talking Points
- Member Surveys

Communications & Branding

- Consistent Communications to WBA Board and Members, WBA Prospective Members, Influencers, Service Clubs, Elected Officials and Broader Community
- Website Updates
- Expand MailChimp List/Database
- Survey Members
- Video
- Research/White Papers
- Letter Writing Templates
- Press Releases
- Testimonials
- Segment Target Audience
- Social Media

Events

- Create Events that are: Educational, Valuable, Relevant, Credible, Enjoyable, Well-Attended, Leveraged, and Balanced
- Type of Events:
 1. Business Person of the Year Awards Banquet
 2. Leaders of Industry Forum
 3. Industry Tours
 4. Board Programs
 5. President's Club Social
 6. Northwest Business Conference and Expo
 7. Economic Forecast Breakfast
 8. New-Member Mixers
 9. Industry-Focused Events
 10. Annual Members Meeting
 11. Best Companies to Work For

WBA COMMITTEES

In early 2018, the WBA Chair and Executive Committee, in addition to beginning the strategic planning process, directed staff to evaluate committee engagement. Five committees were solidified to provide oversight to each of the areas viewed as priorities—brief descriptions of them are included below. Each committee is headed by a chair or co-chairs and is supported by at least one staff member. All Board members are assigned to at least one committee. Except for Executive and Finance, committees are open to non-Board members as well.

Executive Committee



The Executive Committee meets once a month and is made up of the Board Chair, 1st Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, and two At-Large positions. One of the At-Large positions is filled by the immediate Past Chair. The purpose of the Executive Committee is to conduct the business and

affairs of the WBA as defined in Article I of the WBA Bylaws and to act on behalf of the Board when it is not in session on items that do not require a Board vote.

Finance Committee



The Finance Committee is an extension of the Executive Committee. It is composed of a Chair, who is the WBA Secretary/Treasurer, and at least one other Board member not on the Executive Committee. The purpose is to provide oversight and staff direction for specific accounting, reporting,

risk management and other issues that impact the WBA's financial operations and condition. It is also charged to review any agreements which the WBA may enter.

Youth Engagement Initiative Committee



The Youth Engagement Initiative (YEI) Committee is charged with directing the efforts of our Youth Engagement Initiative. Its co-chairs are Board members and have assembled the committee from multiple outside educational institutions and other organizations and is actively seeking funding from private foundations and public grants. The WBA established a separate 501(c)3 tax exempt entity to comply with foundation and grant requirements. The 501(c)3 Board of Directors is made up of two WBA Board members and one non-WBA Board member. The YEI committee has its own Executive Committee that is focused on strategy, planning and funding.

Member/Communications Committee



The Member/Communications Committee is charged with membership growth and retention, WBA events and branding from the standpoint of both the look and voice. The committee handles all forms of media communications and sets communication standards for the entire organization—developing strategies to execute those standards in order to communicate an effective and consistent message to our members, elected officials and the broader public.

Advocacy Committee



The Advocacy Committee is charged with identifying policy issues that impact local business success and economic prosperity. Then, when appropriate, providing fact-based, third party objective research and analysis using credible data in order to facilitate reasonable solutions to issues facing local business. The Advocacy Committee also oversees the “Step Up for Business Success” program which provides funding for its business advocacy, research and education efforts.

POLICY RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & STEP UP

The WBA advocates on behalf of all businesses and industries in Whatcom County, providing they are good actors, follow the rules and comply with all local, state and federal laws. We do that by being the eyes, ears and voice for responsible Whatcom County businesses so they can focus on growing their business, hiring new people, paying good wages, adding to our tax base and giving back through philanthropic efforts. We recognize there are a large number of well-funded local advocacy organizations that sometimes promote policies in conflict with local business interests, which can negatively impact business success and community prosperity.

The WBA believes there is strength in numbers and connects with local businesses to build a strong leadership network of members from a cross-section of local industries and businesses, both large and small in order to strengthen their voice on matters of importance.

Wherever appropriate, the WBA provides fact-based, third party objective research and analysis using credible data in order to facilitate reasonable solutions to issues facing local business. We also engage in education and advocacy for businesses on policy matters that are deemed to be detrimental to business success. We build coalitions and develop strategies to assist businesses in engagement on important policy issues in order to change the trajectory of bad policy before it is implemented.

Advocacy Committee Oversight and Direction

ULTIMATE VISION

The WBA is actively engaged in fact-based business research, education, communication and advocacy for its members on issues deemed important to local business success and community prosperity. The WBA has built an extraordinary level of influence and credibility because it gathers credible data and information and shares it in a thoughtful, respectful and solution-focused manner.

When necessary, the WBA successfully engages large numbers of business community members to speak out on issues that may be detrimental to their business, industry or the local economy.

These efforts are supported by hundreds of local businesses through our Step Up for Business Success Program. Because of our influence, approach and successes, WBA Board members and other members are eager to encourage their peers to join our efforts.

3 KEY FOCUS AREAS



POLICY RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & STEP UP

ACTIONS

Step Up for Business Success Program Growth

- Step Up Program Growth to Sustain Efforts
- Simple Communications (in small, understandable pieces)
- Member Research to Build Credibility & Influence:
 1. Income
 2. Wages
 3. Employment numbers
 4. Giving back (philanthropy numbers)
 5. Tax base impact

Fact-Based Research and Education

- Engage in Workforce Development (See YEI)
- Industry Research (Add to Cherry Point, Agriculture)
- Issue Research (Homelessness/Affordable Housing)

Advocacy for Local Business

- Issue-Vetting Process:
 1. How it impacts local business/economy
 2. How it impacts WBA members
 3. How it impacts economic growth
- Build and Lead Coalition Groups
- Engage on 100% Clean Energy Plan
- Support ongoing Cherry Point Issues
- Support ongoing Agri-business Issues
- Pursue U.S. SBA Office of Business Advocacy
- Encourage Land Use/Permitting that Support Economic Development
- Organize Local Like-Minded Coalition
- Identify Business-Minded Representatives
- Outreach to Local Elected Officials

POLICY RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & STEP UP

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

(OFFERED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS)

- Education on business issues
- Policy changes and business advocacy
- Economic, environmental and political research and analysis
- Being an objective voice on substantive matters
- Engaging the business community on issues
- Encouraging leadership
- Promoting a positive message
- Bringing together like-minded people and groups to engage by various means
- Identify opportunities where the business community offers solutions to the community at large

TARGETS FOR COMMUNICATION

(OFFERED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS)

- Business Owners/Leaders
- Employees (Connect the Success of Business to Their Success)
- The Uninformed
- Engaged Voters
- Registered Voters
- Elected Officials
- Policy Influencers
- Non-Profits
- Media
- Young People (Millenials, College and High School Students)

POLICY RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & STEP UP

WBA MESSAGING

(OFFERED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS)

- Business success is the biggest driver of community prosperity and jobs
- Environmental stewardship and economic prosperity are compatible
- Business leaders can offer great solutions on policy issues
- We can work together to promote a positive business climate
- The business community gives back in great measure
- Business 101 for young people
- Economic education for young people
- Importance of personal freedom to choose, property rights, etc.
- Regulatory burdens hurt business
- Successful businesses can contribute more
- Business deserves predictability, consistency and fairness
- WBA is an honest broker on issues of importance
- WBA is a source for facts you can trust

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

(OFFERED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS)

- Researchers to study issues, write reports, attend meetings and deliver findings
- Media campaigns on issues of importance
- One on one meetings with local media
- Use of social media relentlessly
- Talking points on issues for Board and members
- Bulletin 2x per month for issue updates
- More video used on website, newsletters, emails, etc.
- More research: Economic impact of every industry
- Economic and business resource center
- Reach out to develop strategic alliance and leverage other industry groups
- Upgraded, consistent email strategy
- Create WBA Speakers Bureau (CEOs, Presidents, Business owners)
- Leverage the WBA Board of Directors
- Connect local business leaders with young people
- Build a strong volunteer/ambassador program

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE (YEI)

As part of the WBA Strategic Advocacy Plan, which was approved by the WBA Board in 2016, the WBA recognized the need to connect with young people. The YEI evolved from this recognition. The WBA Board set a goal to develop a Youth Engagement Initiative in order to:

- Communicate to young people that business drives a healthy economy
- Explain economic opportunities that exist locally
- Offer hands-on learning experiences to youth

The WBA formed a 501(c)3, then engaged business leaders through the YEI Committee to develop the concept. The proposed action was to build a “bridge” among employers and educators, students, parents, young adults and supporting efforts to facilitate better information flow for economic opportunity.

Youth Engagement Committee Oversight and Direction

ULTIMATE VISION

Because of the efforts of the WBA Youth Engagement Initiative, we have a more dynamic economy with opportunities and clear pathways for local youth and families to find livable wage jobs in local businesses and industries. Through this initiative, the WBA works in partnership with employers, educators and like-minded organizations to create synergies that advance youth employment and career opportunities in Whatcom County. Through these efforts the WBA communicates with local young people regularly about the value of business in the community and how business success supports their own goals of long-term livable-wage employment.

3 KEY FOCUS AREAS



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE (YEI)

ACTIONS

Program Development

- Establish better business ties with young people in Whatcom County
- Create a hub to offer job information and employment opportunities
- Unify efforts with employers, like-minded groups and educators
- Identify pathways for students and young adults to transition to careers and family wage jobs
- Develop synergistic relationships between educators and employers
- Enhance student, parent and community awareness of pathways to local employment opportunities
- Provide youth with real-time, hands-on workplace experiences, opportunities and internships
- Assist in workforce development for Whatcom County business and industry
- Collaborate with existing organizations and stakeholders to avoid redundancy

501(c)3 Administration

- Organization Metrics
 1. Interim Director identified and hired
 2. 501(c)3 requirements met
 3. Web presence/platform built
 4. Establish program success goals (KPI's)
 5. Time-line for implementation
 6. Numbers of partners engaged
 7. Grant requests started (longer term)
 8. Funding target/interim budget

Funding

- Start-up funding from WBA
- Identify and contact at least 20 potential private foundations
- Connect with Whatcom Community Foundation to get list of potential partners
- Identify public-grant opportunities
- Apply for public and private grants

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