



**NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
& AFFILIATES**

**STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW  
2022-2025**



REVISED SEPTEMBER 2022

## NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **Mr. Winfield S. Brown**

President & CEO  
Heywood Hospital

### **Mr. Roy M. Nascimento, IOM, CCE**

President & CEO  
North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

### **Ms. Allie Catlin**

Owner  
Smith's Country Cheese

### **Mr. Bruce Platzman**

President  
AIS, Inc.

### **Ms. Jackie Cullen**

Owner  
River Styx Brewing, LLC

### **Ms. Lori Richardson**

President  
Aging Services of North Central Massachusetts

### **Mr. Tony Fields**

President & Owner  
Cleartech Group

### **Mr. Steven Rocheleau**

President  
Rocheleau Tool & Die Co., Inc.

### **Mr. Matthew Fournier**

President  
Elite Construction & Design, Inc.

### **Mr. Rodrigo Souza**

Owner  
Comeketo Brazilian Steakhouse

### **Ms. Melissa Glenny**

President  
Franklin Professional Associates, Inc.

### **Mr. Henry Tessman**

General Manager  
Great Wolf Lodge New England

### **Mr. Michael Johansen**

President & CEO  
Bemis Associates, Inc.

### **Dr. James Vander Hooven (Vice-Chair)**

President  
Mount Wachusett Community College

### **Dr. Richard Lapidus (Assistant Treasurer)**

President  
Fitchburg State University

### **Mr. John Zarrella**

President & Founder  
Research Results, Inc.

### **Ms. Rachel Lopez (Immediate Past Chair)**

President  
Resource Management, Inc.

### **Ms. Barbara Mahoney (Treasurer)**

President & CEO  
Leominster Credit Union

### **Mr. Christopher McCarthy (Chair)**

President, COO  
Fidelity Bank

**NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Mr. Scot Barrett**

Director  
BDO USA, LLP

**Mr. Raymond F. LaFond**

Retired  
Enterprise Bank and Trust Company

**Mr. Trevor Beauregard**

Dir. of Community Development & Planning  
City of Gardner

**Mr. Raymond J. Martino**

Retired Chairman of the Board  
Simonds International

**Ms. Christina DiRusso**

Commercial Lender  
bankHometown

**Mr. Roy M. Nascimento, IOM, CCE**

President & CEO  
North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

**Mr. David Duval**

President  
Protective Services, Inc.

**Ms. Karen L. Thorne**

SVP, Chief Credit Officer  
Main Street Bank

**Mr. Mark Freeman**

President  
Steel-Fab, Inc.

**VISIT NORTH CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Mr. Al Rose**

Owner  
Red Apple Farm

**Mr. Henry Tessman**

General Manager  
Great Wolf Lodge

**Mr. Chris Stimpson**

Marketing Manager  
Wachusett Mountain Ski Area

**Mr. Rick Walton**

Owner  
Gardner Ale House

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF

### **Ms. Rebecca Beaton**

Vice President, Lending

### **Ms. Diane Burnette**

Johnny Appleseed Visitors' Center Manager

### **Ms. Sandie Cataldo**

Senior Economic Development Manager

### **Mr. Travis Condon**

Public Affairs Manager

### **Ms. Maribel Cruz**

Economic Development Manager

### **Ms. Kat Deal**

Events & Programs Manager

### **Ms. Tracy Gagnon**

Manager of Membership Recruitment & Engagement

### **Ms. Lauren Goulet**

Operations Manager

### **Ms. Bea Lee**

Loan & Economic Development Administrator

### **Mr. Roy M. Nascimento, IOM, CCE**

President & CEO

### **Ms. Sabbra Reyes**

Johnny Appleseed Visitors' Center Assistant Manager  
Manager, Work North Central Jobs Board

### **Ms. Teresa Roberts**

Director, Financial Services

### **Mr. Steve Sugar**

Vice President, Lending

### **Ms. Vicky Tippawong**

Marketing & Communications Manager

### **Mr. Norman Vigeant**

Vice President, Lending

### **Ms. Terry Young**

Manager of Talent and Educational Initiatives

Dear members, regional partners, and friends,

On behalf of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce and our affiliate organizations, I am delighted to share an overview of our new strategic plan. This three-year roadmap builds upon the considerable momentum generated through the keen vision and steady execution of our prior plan (2018-2021). Despite a backdrop of great uncertainty caused by a worldwide pandemic and global economic emergency, we made noteworthy progress along several strategic fronts. These include:

- ▶ A tenfold increase in the value of new business loans awarded;
- ▶ The provision of nearly 4,000 hours of direct technical assistance, contributing to the creation or retainment of more than 400 jobs;
- ▶ Expansion of the Chamber Foundation's scholarship program, which now exceeds \$50,000 annually;
- ▶ Successful advocacy for key local issues, including securing a single tax rate in Fitchburg, narrowing the split tax rate in Clinton, and obtaining state and federal support for regional economic development efforts;
- ▶ Diversification of the Chamber's volunteer engagement among young professionals, women, and underrepresented groups; and
- ▶ Achievement of four-star accreditation and recognition as a National Chamber of the Year Finalist.

The new plan (2022-2025) capitalizes upon these successes while also acknowledging a significant number of emerging opportunities and challenges currently facing our region. At the same time, it incorporates many of the invaluable recommendations of *One North Central*, a comprehensive regional economic development plan commissioned by the Chamber in concert with our local partners and unveiled in 2021.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of our Board Members and staff who gave so generously of their time, expertise, and insights in thinking about the road ahead for North Central Massachusetts. Equally important, I wish to thank all of you — our members, regional partners, and friends — who each and every day are doing their very best to make our region the best in the state to live, work, raise a family, or build a business.

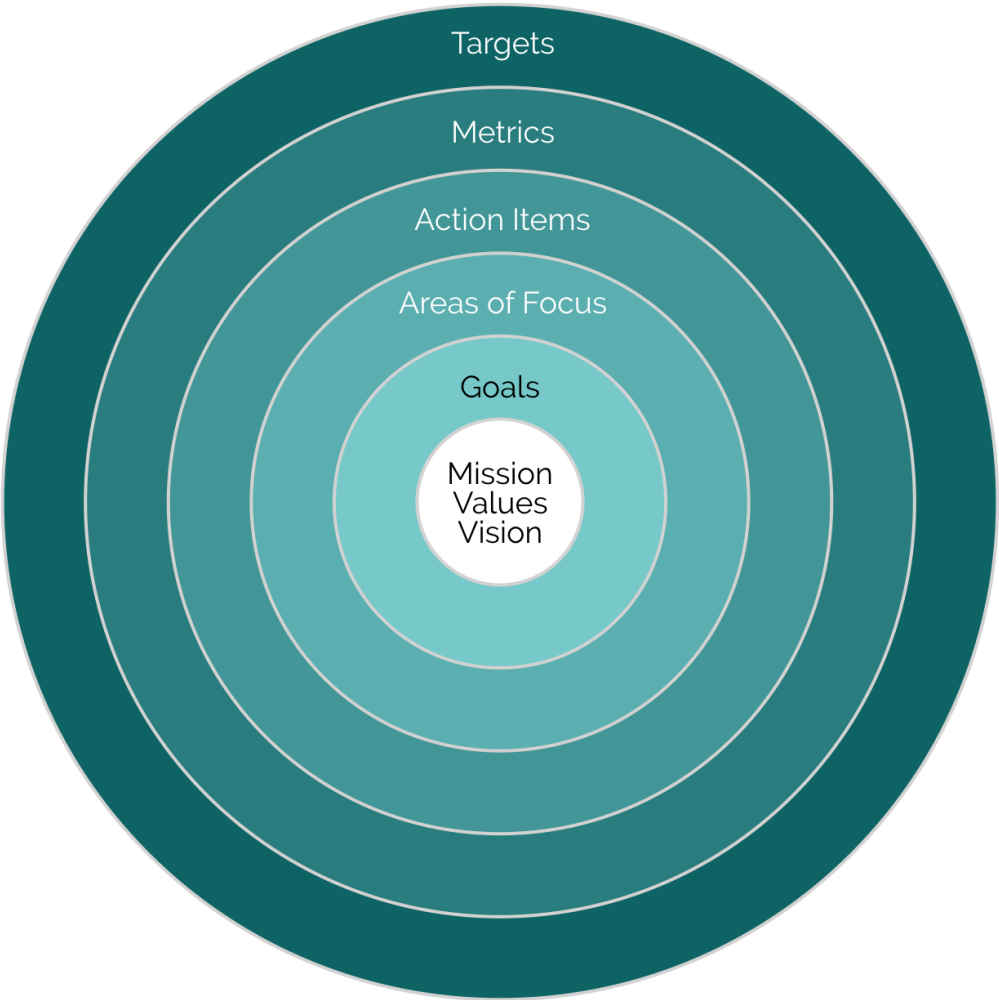


Roy Nascimento  
President & CEO

Sincerely,

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature of the word "Roy" in black ink.

Roy Nascimento  
President & CEO



Mission	What is the Chamber's enduring sense of purpose?
Values	To which standards does the Chamber hold itself?
Vision	What is the desired, long-term impact of the Chamber's work?
Goals	How is the Chamber advancing its mission and reaching for its vision while reflecting its values?
Areas of Focus	What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?
Action Items*	What discrete and achievable steps is the Chamber taking to to pursue its goals?
Metrics	What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?
Targets	How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?

*\*Note: Action items are described in the Chamber's Business Plan*

MISSION	<i>What is the Chamber's enduring sense of purpose?</i>	<b>We advance the economy of North Central Massachusetts and strengthen its quality of place by connecting businesses, people, and ideas.</b>
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VALUES	<i>To which standards does the Chamber hold itself?</i>	<p><b>Integrity</b> We are open, candid, and fair; honor our commitments; and adhere to high ethical standards.</p> <p><b>Excellence</b> We consistently deliver programs, services, and products of the highest quality that meet the expectations of our members and other regional stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Focus</b> We stay on task and achieve the goals we set, but also recognize the need to readily assess outcomes and realign efforts based upon the evolving needs of our members and the region.</p> <p><b>Catalytic Leadership</b> We strive to work across the whole of our community to create the conditions for shared idea generation, understanding, action, and progress.</p> <p><b>Inclusion</b> We value, respect, and involve the region's rich diversity of people, businesses, organizations, and perspectives as we advance our mission.</p> <p><b>Innovation</b> We are expansive and future-oriented in our thinking; continually marshal our creative and inventive energies to respond to challenges; and embrace change as opportunity.</p>
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VISION	<i>What is the desired, long-term impact of the Chamber's work?</i>	<b>Inspired business leadership, robust economic development, and collaborative community partnerships make North Central Massachusetts the best region in the state to live, work, raise a family, or build a business.</b>
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GOALS	<i>How is the Chamber advancing its mission and reaching for its vision while reflecting its values?</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Strengthen the regional economy and improve the overall business climate.</b></li> <li><b>Promote the region as an ideal place to live, work, visit, and invest.</b></li> <li><b>Partner with educational, business, and nonprofit communities to address the region's growing workforce development needs.</b></li> <li><b>Deepen the region's understanding of complex issues, identify collaborative solutions, and advocate to key decision makers and stakeholders.</b></li> <li><b>Position the Chamber for long-term sustainability and success.</b></li> </ol>
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AREAS OF FOCUS

What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?

- ▶ Providing services and benefits that offer Chamber members the opportunity to save money, save time, or provide support for the challenges they face in their businesses
- ▶ Providing programs that offer Chamber members the opportunity to network with their peers or to meet new customers and/or promote their businesses
- ▶ Expanding opportunities for direct B2B connections that effectively link local buyers and sellers with targeted partners
- ▶ Building and supporting shared information platforms that assist small and micro businesses
- ▶ Supporting a variety of B2B mentoring programs to strengthen community, enhance connectivity, and serve new and existing business owners alike
- ▶ Fostering the development of industry peer groups that can share best practices, both in the region and externally
- ▶ Hosting training seminars aimed specifically at the needs of start-ups
- ▶ Adding to our existing lending portfolio by increasing micro-loan amounts and expanding loan products
- ▶ Developing a process for regionally-coordinated grant applications
- ▶ Supporting the development of a Business Investment Fund for Regional Economic Development
- ▶ Supporting the development of a Site Preparation Fund
- ▶ Supporting the creation of a Regional Land Bank

METRICS

TARGETS

What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?	How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?
# of new loans awarded annually	\$2.5 million by 2025
\$ of private resources leveraged annually	\$5 million per year by 2025
# of jobs created or retained from lending or technical assistance annually	175 jobs by 2025
# of hours of technical assistance provided annually	3,000 hours by 2025



AREAS OF FOCUS

*What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?*

- ▶ Promoting the resources, positive activities, and accomplishments of North Central Massachusetts; and encouraging citizens to take pride in their community by developing greater community awareness, identity, and image
- ▶ Championing regionalism to enhance the business environment and boost economic development through the coordination and leveraging of resources
- ▶ Finding solutions to make it easier for small businesses to take advantage of the Gift Local program
- ▶ Supporting the development of a regional e-commerce marketplace connected to the Gift Local effort
- ▶ Showcasing area business success stories on digital platforms
- ▶ Developing marketing materials for target industries, quality of life metrics, workforce metrics, and available incentives
- ▶ Ensuring tourism and economic development efforts are aligned to advance regional goals
- ▶ Creating a regional public relations campaign to increase positive media hits
- ▶ Expanding and modernizing the visitors' center with digital advertising, new exhibits, and local products
- ▶ Developing a Regional Tourism Marketing District
- ▶ Coordinating with regional organizations on office hours at co-work spaces and centralizing efforts
- ▶ Working with municipalities to incentivize entrepreneurs to open small businesses in the region (Workspace Location Grant Program)
- ▶ Supporting the development of a centralized database of space and properties for prospective business leaders in the region

METRICS	TARGETS
<i>What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?</i>	<i>How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?</i>
\$ of annual economic impact from regional marketing efforts	<b>\$200 million in direct visitor spending by 2025</b>
% overall increase in annual website visitation	<b>20% increase in unique pageviews by 2025</b> <b>20% increase in users by 2025</b> <b>15% increase in Google impressions by 2025</b>
% overall increase in earned media	<b>45% increase in social media followers by 2025</b> <b>40% increase in social media impressions by 2025</b> <b>ongoing positive media placements in traditional media outlets</b>
\$ of overall sales for e-Gift Local cards	<b>\$75,000 (cumulative) by 2025</b>
# of annual visitors to the Johnny Appleseed Visitors' Center	<b>180,000 by 2025 (estimate only)</b>

AREAS OF FOCUS

*What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?*

- ▶ Partnering with local institutions to improve the effectiveness of job-training programs and other educational offerings focused on building critical skills in great demand by area businesses
- ▶ Designing additional specialized programs to build affinity for the Chamber with students currently attending the region's numerous universities, colleges, community colleges, and vocational schools
- ▶ Engaging the region's youth through seminars, internships, events, and trade fairs to help them identify opportunities and career paths in North Central Massachusetts
- ▶ Adding workforce development professional capacity to the current Chamber staff
- ▶ Improving the reach, functionality, and efficacy of the Worknorthcentral.com Jobs Board site and related hiring events
- ▶ Better utilizing the Chamber's Foundation to have a stronger impact on talent/education efforts in the region
- ▶ Creating industry roundtables to discuss market climate, industry trends, employment/skills needs, and growth prospects
- ▶ Continuing to develop and refine public-facing regional dashboards for economic and workforce development
- ▶ Creating a North Central Massachusetts job fair, to include soft skill workshops and trainings
- ▶ Strengthening the North Central Massachusetts Education Compact and establishing a Collective Impact Partnership

METRICS

TARGETS

*What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?*

*How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?*

# of new workforce development partnerships developed

**3 by 2025**

\$ of overall Foundation assets (corpus) to support education and workforce development

**\$1 million by 2025**

\$ of Foundation scholarships awarded annually to students in the region

**\$56,000 by 2025**

# of overall jobs promoted via the Chamber Jobs Board

**16,000 (cumulative) by 2025**

AREAS OF FOCUS

*What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?*

- ▶ Developing and retaining an ongoing source of diverse leaders who are prepared and committed to serve as catalysts and sustainers for positive change for the betterment of North Central Massachusetts
- ▶ Proactively advocating on local, state, and federal government affairs issues that will have a direct impact on the business community or impact the economic advancement of North Central Massachusetts
- ▶ Expanding the Chamber's information network to keep better track of legislative and regulatory developments across the region
- ▶ Expanding the capacity of the Chamber to conduct high quality research and analysis to improve policy, decision making and community development goals and objectives, all the while better understanding the critical challenges and opportunities facing the region
- ▶ Proactively harnessing the shared reach and horsepower of the Chamber's Leadership Council to deepen the organization's connectivity with key decision makers on timely regional issues
- ▶ Advocating for funding to help improve downtowns and town centers in the region
- ▶ Advocating for regional transportation priority projects that could aid economic development efforts
- ▶ Developing materials to educate leaders on the importance of being flexible with local regulations
- ▶ Lending support to municipalities undertaking efforts that advance regional economic development efforts
- ▶ Hosting periodic regional summits/events to discuss challenges and opportunities for target industry success

METRICS	TARGETS
<i>What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?</i>	<i>How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?</i>
% participation increase in all community forums and outreach events	<b>20% increase by 2025</b>
# of research projects conducted or commissioned annually by the Chamber or its affiliates	<b>1 or more</b>
# of annual graduates of the Community Leadership Institute	<b>20 by 2025</b>
advocacy success stories (see Appendix: NCMCC Advocacy Agenda)	<b>qualitative</b>
description of studies commissioned	<b>qualitative</b>

AREAS OF FOCUS

*What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?*

- Increasing market penetration in the region and improving member retention
- Increasing non-dues revenue sources to strengthen the financial position of the Chamber and its affiliates
- Expanding efforts to market the benefits of the Chamber to young professionals in the hopes of building a new generation of aspiring leaders who will serve the community and be increasingly engaged in the Chamber
- Leveraging the full power of the Chamber's ongoing scholarship program as a recruitment tool and opportunity to engage young professionals
- Infusing the Chamber's broader thinking with the perspectives of young professionals, women, Latinos, and underrepresented populations by adding representation on the Board, committees, and other key decision-making bodies
- Diversifying the Board to make it more reflective of the region's diversity
- Emphasizing the need for direct outreach to new immigrant communities
- Further tailoring Chamber programming to meet the different needs of young professionals
- Growing the Chamber's young professionals' program through family-friendly community and networking events
- Developing compelling member-only opportunities to drive membership and increase retention

METRICS	TARGETS
<i>What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?</i>	<i>How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?</i>
% annual retention of existing members	<b>86% by 2025</b>
# of overall new members	<b>125 (cumulative) by 2025</b>
\$ of annual non-dues revenue	<b>\$1.2 million by 2025</b>
% increase of engagement among young professionals, women, Latinos, and other underrepresented populations	<b>20% increase in loans and technical assistance to these populations by 2025</b> <b>increased participation in events and committees/boards</b>

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

- Regional equity
- One North Central recommendations
- Public infrastructure
- Broadband and high-speed internet
- Property tax rates
- Investments in public promotion of tourism
- Regulatory reform and streamlined permitting

EDUCATION

- Support high quality education
- Aligning K-12 curriculum with employer needs
- Ensuring college degrees and certificate attainment
- Vocational education

SMALL BUSINESS

- Minimum wage
- Unemployment insurance taxes
- Micro-lending and technical assistance investments
- Health insurance and healthcare costs
- Energy costs
- Barriers to employment

TRANSPORTATION

- Modernize Route 2
- Reform MBTA
- Increase transportation options for employees
- Roadway improvements
- Airport improvements
- Commuter rail improvements

MANUFACTURING

- Removing the stigma associated with manufacturing
- Removal of the inventory tax
- International trade and tariffs

REAL ESTATE

- Expand housing options
- Commercial and industrial real estate investment

# North Central MASSACHUSETTS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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