

Measuring Our Progress: 2022–2025 Strategic Plan Results



Goal 1

Strengthen the regional economy and improve the overall business climate

\$2.5M of new loans awarded annually	✗	While we generated \$1.1 million in loans in FY2024, we haven't yet reached our ambitious annual target. However, our three-year total of \$4.153 million shows impressive growth from just \$177,500 in FY2014, despite economic challenges and staffing constraints.
\$5M of private resources leveraged annually	✗	We leveraged \$2.58M in FY2024, making progress toward the ambitious \$5M annual target we set. Our three-year total was \$5.15M and we have achieved \$42M cumulatively since we launched our micro-lending program, which demonstrates our partnerships with local banks and success connecting businesses with capital.
175 jobs created or retained annually	✗	Our lending and assistance created or retained 41 jobs in FY2024, below our annual target of 175. However, our three-year impact of 313 jobs shows meaningful economic contribution despite shifting business models.
3,000 hours of technical assistance annually	✗	We provided 2,175 hours of technical assistance in FY2024, approaching our ambitious annual goal of delivering 3,000 annually. Our three-year total of 7,500 hours reflects our expanded support despite resource constraints.

Goal 2

Promote the region as an ideal place to live, work, visit and invest

\$200M economic impact from regional marketing efforts	✓	Direct visitor spending reached \$497M in CY2023, far exceeding our ambitious goal of \$200M. This impressive growth from \$118 million in 2014 demonstrates the effectiveness of our regional marketing strategies and the increasing appeal of North Central Massachusetts as a destination.
Overall increase in website impressions/visitors	✓	Our website traffic across our platforms has increased by 130% since FY2022, far exceeding our original goals. This expanded digital presence enhances our members' visibility and strengthens our ability to promote regional assets.
Overall Increase in earned media	✓	Our social media following across all platforms has grown by 225% since 2022, reaching over 57,000 followers and placing us among Massachusetts' leading chambers in social media presence. Impressions have surged significantly as well, expanding our reach and amplifying our members' visibility while strengthening our ability to promote regional assets and opportunities.
\$75,000 of sales of Gift Local cards (Cumulative)	✓	We have sold a total of \$77,304 in Gift Local Gift Cards since launching the program, exceeding our goal. The \$18,146 sold since FY2022 demonstrates continued momentum while supporting local businesses and encouraging residents to support local businesses.
180K visitors annually to the Johnny Appleseed Visitors' Center	✗	Our newly implemented electronic counter system recorded 121,500 visitors entering the center during business hours in CY2024. This more accurate measurement replaces previous estimates and excludes after-hours visitors and those who stopped on the grounds.

Goal 3

Partner with educational, business, and nonprofit communities to address the region's growing workforce development needs.

3 workforce development partnerships developed by 2025	✓	New workforce development partnerships were established, meeting our target. We formed collaborations with Mount Wachusett Community College, the Spanish American Center, MBAE and other local and state stakeholders to address employment challenges and connect businesses with qualified talent.
\$1 million in Chamber Foundation Assets by 2025	✗	In FY2024, the Foundation's overall assets reached \$642,558, marking a 9.1% increase to support education and workforce development. While we continue working toward our \$1 million goal, we've built solid momentum.
\$56K of Foundations scholarships awarded annually to students in the region	✓	We anticipate awarding \$56,000 in Foundation scholarships to students in the region in 2025, an increase from the \$52,000 in 2021. This growth demonstrates our commitment to supporting education and workforce development.
16,000 overall jobs promoted via the Chamber Jobs Board	—	Since its launch in 2020, the Chamber Job Board has featured 13,290 job postings with over 26,000 user sessions, demonstrating strong employer and job seeker engagement. While we continue working toward our cumulative goal of 16,000 postings, the high session volume shows this platform has become an essential resource for connecting regional employers with talent.

Goal 4

Deepen the region's understanding of complex issues, identify collaborative solutions, and advocate makers and stakeholders.

20% participation increase in all community forums and outreach events	—	Mixed results were achieved across our community engagement efforts. While some events met or exceeded the 20% growth target, others saw limited growth. We're embracing a culture of continuous improvement to better reach diverse audiences and enhance business community participation.
At least one research project conducted or commissioned annually by the Chamber or its affiliates	✓	The Chamber has emerged as a trusted regional thought leader through high-quality research. We commissioned the comprehensive Land Bank Planning Study and TDMD Feasibility Study, while also conducting specialized research internally that has directly informed our economic development initiatives and strengthened our efforts.
20 annual graduates of the Community Leadership Institute	✓	Our 2025 Community Leadership Institute class included 25 participants, up from 17 in 2021 and exceeding our target of 20. This growth reflects increasing recognition of the program's value in developing regional leadership.
Advocacy success stories	✓	Our advocacy efforts remained strong, with proactive engagement of local, state, and federal officials regarding business needs and regional priorities. We advanced key priorities in workforce development, economic development, transportation, and local taxes.
Description of studies commissioned	✓	During this period, we completed two significant research projects with regional impact. The Land Bank Planning Study laid groundwork for establishing a new affiliate organization that will help overcome hurdles to development by addressing vacant and underutilized properties. The TDMD Feasibility Study involved extensive consultation with hotel leaders to evaluate a sustainable funding model for tourism promotion that would reduce reliance on unpredictable state funding.

Goal 5

Position the Chamber for long-term sustainability and success

86% retention of existing members	✗	Membership metrics remained solid, with member dollar retention increasing in FY2024 to 86%, though account retention saw a slight decrease to 82% from 85% the previous year. Our strong recruitment success impacted overall retention rates, as new members typically have lower first-year retention.
125 of overall new members	✓	We welcomed over 250 new members since our last strategic plan, demonstrating strong recruitment momentum. Each new member strengthens our network and increases our collective influence in advancing regional economic priorities.
\$1.2 Million in Non-Dues Revenue by 2025	✓	In FY2024, non-dues revenue was \$1.28 million, exceeding our goal through positive increases in management fees, grants, event revenue, and miscellaneous revenue. This diversification of funding sources strengthens our financial sustainability and provides resource to support economic and other initiatives.
% Increase engagement among young professionals, women, Latinos, and other underrepresented populations	✓	We expanded efforts to engage Latinx businesses and continued to diversify our boards and committees. Over 70% of our lending and technical assistance were provided to target markets, achieving our 20% increase goal while creating more inclusive economic opportunities.

We launched several initiatives directly aligned with our strategic and economic development plans:

- Launched the Manufacturing Council of North Central Massachusetts to serve our critical manufacturing sector through targeted programing and support, demonstrating our commitment to strengthening priority industries.
- Introduced the Entrepreneur Awards Reception and Resource Showcase, creating a platform to celebrate small business success while connecting startups with essential resources for growth.
- Consolidated our economic development and chamber websites while incorporating improvements, new resources and implementing SEO strategies. We simultaneously enhanced our tourism website, creating a comprehensive digital presence that improves member visibility and visitor engagement, supports economic development goals, and drives significant traffic increases across our platforms.
- Completed renovations and improvements to the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center, enhancing our ability to showcase regional attractions and provide first-class visitor services to thousands of travelers annually.
- Created the new Regional Business Investment Fund in partnership with community stakeholders, establishing a sustainable resource to support strategic real estate development projects throughout North Central Massachusetts.
- Ramped up our talent and workforce efforts, including the Equitable Credentialing Initiative, Talent Compact and expanded regional Career and Hiring Event.
- Constructed over ten community welcome signs throughout the region, enhancing community identity while supporting placemaking and regional branding objectives.
- Provided over \$150,000 in mini-grants to small businesses in the region, helping entrepreneurs overcome challenges and seize opportunities during a period of economic transition.
- Established the North Central Massachusetts Land Bank, one of our most ambitious strategic goals, creating a powerful new tool to support development across our 27 communities.