ROGERS-LOWELL AREA
Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce is to be the voice of business, to promote and initiate responsible economic growth, and to address community challenges in the Rogers-Lowell area and the region.

2009 Business Plan

The economic landscape has changed completely as we begin 2009, the 87th year for our Chamber. Some would argue we're in tough economic times in northwest Arkansas, while others believe we look rosy compared to communities elsewhere. Regardless of your opinion, there is no doubt that 2009 will be a pivotal year, and the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to providing the leadership and support which will be critical to the future success of our community.

Our focus this year is simple: **to serve and support members and to help you thrive.** This is no time to maintain the status quo, and our approach will be to charge the hill, to be aggressive and innovative. This means revamping programs to ensure they have impact for every single participant, focusing on critical issues such as downtown Rogers, the grooming of future leadership for our community, and delivering programming to help our members not just survive, but thrive. Our 2009 Business Plan reflects this attitude of advancing and attacking, rather than remaining stagnant.

We will continue to rely on candid feedback from our members about what we're doing right, and what we need to improve for your benefit. We know the business environment looks very different today than it did years and even months ago, but we are taking our cue on tackling the coming year from our members: it is the committed, confident and creative businesses that will emerge strongest in the coming months and years, and we look forward to helping you succeed. Here's to an extraordinary 2009!

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The Business Development Division of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce proactively provides innovative programs, assistance and technology to aid, support and increase business opportunities for new and existing business and industry, and expand the retail and service business available in our community to increase the local tax base.

Business Development Division Goals:
** Capital Campaign Promise Fulfillment*

I. Recruit and Retain a High Quality Workforce

1. Host two NWA Job Fairs to connect employers and workers.* Expand events to include workforce readiness topics such as resume writing, mock interviews, professional dress and career path changes.
2. Maintain job bank, job seeker resume file and employment resources.*
3. Supplement quality workforce recruitment with relocation materials (DVDs, publications).*
4. Support local employers through timely seminars, speakers and customized outreach on an as-needed basis throughout the year.
5. Represent and advocate for workforce issues by partnering with and ensuring representation within local workforce boards and committees.

II. Engage in Small Business Outreach

1. Provide high-caliber, affordable and accessible training and resources through the small-business track of the NWA Business Conference.
2. Assist new business start-ups, franchisees and existing businesses by providing information, publications, resources and connections to meet the unique needs of small businesses.*
3. Inform, educate and connect entrepreneurs and small business people at forums to include four Eggs & Issues events and twelve FYI Lunch and Learn events, which will be expanded in frequency and content, with a special series during the first quarter of 2009 focused heavily on topics related to "growing your business in a changing economy."
4. Encourage small businesses by recognizing success through the "Small Business of the Month" and "Small Business of the Year" award program.

III. Encourage New Business Development and Existing Business Expansion

1. Respond aggressively to inquiries regarding new economic development opportunities representing quality, growth and opportunity for our community and region.*
2. Provide information, data, demographics, resources and flexible, accommodating support to new, existing and expanding businesses. Orchestrate partnerships and opportunities for local business alliances.*
3. Support target industries such as childcare centers or retail tax drivers and pursue appropriate investment in key emerging areas such as redevelopment in historic downtown Rogers, expansion of the tax base for the city of Lowell and rejuvenation of threatened areas.

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IV. Lead Progressive Business Development Initiatives

1. In partnership with the Northwest Arkansas Business Journal, host the region's highest caliber business event, the Northwest Arkansas Business Conference and Expo. Provide resources ranging from small business tactics to international business solutions to advance small, medium and large businesses throughout northwest Arkansas.
2. Begin work toward "Vision 2025" priorities for historic downtown Rogers, namely developing a funding strategy for the hire of a dedicated staff person, as well as marketing and economic development materials to attract employers, which will in turn prompt an influx of residents, redevelopment and retail growth.
3. BuyNWA was launched in 2008 to positively affect consumer confidence by encouraging the general public to purchase goods and services in northwest Arkansas. Following the success of this campaign, the second phase of BuyNWA will be launched with a business-to-business focus encouraging businesses to review purchases and, when feasible and at a competitive cost, shift purchases to northwest Arkansas providers in order to stimulate the local economy.
4. Align Chamber resources with key partners including the Arkansas World Trade Center, the Arkansas Department of Economic Development, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Tyson Foods, Inc., and J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc., and consumer product companies (suppliers) to improve the local economic climate.
5. Expand delivery of information to newcomers through innovative communication and outreach efforts with key partners.
6. Implement an Emerging Leaders program focused on a substantive program that engages new and existing talent and provides a connection between current and future leaders, creating continuity and a lasting legacy for our community.
7. Partner with the Rogers Public School District, regional health care providers, employers and area realtors to promote the competitiveness of public schools, promote the delivery of world-class, destination healthcare and proactively market the community to potential new residents.

V. Minority business development

1. Provide assistance and tools to potential start-up minority businesses in Spanish and English, including assistance in understanding regulations required for operating a small business.
2. Assist minority individuals with preparing and sending resumes.
3. Offer resources and educational opportunities for minority business owners, specifically, professional development seminars on business topics of interest for potential and current business owners in Spanish.
4. Provide opportunities for members to network in a comfortable atmosphere at *Fiesta de Negocios,* and at Multicultural Networking Luncheons that provide an introduction to business networking for those who may be unfamiliar with it.
5. Improve communication with minority business members through personal visits and through the special minority business e-mail messages.
6. Host the Rogers International Festival to create a friendly environment among all cultures, to improve the quality of life, to celebrate diversity, promote understanding, and to educate residents about the challenges and advantages of cultural diversity.

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The Community Development Division of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce creates and supports innovative programs that help members enhance their businesses while maintaining a quality of life that ensures continual pride of Rogers and Lowell.

Community Development

Community Development Division Goals:

I. Develop Future Community Leaders and Improve the Quality of Life in the Region

1. Provide community leadership training offered to future leaders through Leadership Benton County.
2. Offer training in leadership skills, desired employee attributes and life skills to high-school students through the First Leadership program.
3. Direct volunteer efforts to promote recreational trails in the area.

II. Support Education. Promote and support programs between businesses and schools that serve as education and recruitment tools to enable businesses to compete in an ever-changing economy.

1. Recognize the academic accomplishments of students through Academic Awards, SMILE Awards, and the Rogers Students/Graduates With Promise program.
2. Honor outstanding achievements by teachers through the "Teacher of the Year" awards, the "Educator Hall of Fame" and the Tillery Grant Program.
3. Provide businesses with opportunities for recognition for their support of schools through the "Business Partner of the Year" award, and at the Chamber Night at School Board event.
4. Coordinate the Rogers Students/Graduates With Promise credentialing program that promotes high-school student achievement to support district and business initiatives.
5. Support the higher-education goals of Rogers students through the Community-Based Scholarship Program. Request scholarship donations from Chamber members, local businesses and previous donors.
6. Demonstrate appreciation for area faculty and staff by hosting the annual Teacher Appreciation Breakfast and Education Fair, which offers local businesses an opportunity to showcase products and services.
7. Promote the Chamber as a resource for Rogers High School and Heritage High School academies through publicity and recruitment of Chamber members to meet school needs.

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III. Promote Healthy Communities

1. Tobacco Prevention Grant 2009
    - Conduct a comprehensive media campaign increasing the knowledge of the harmful effects of tobacco and second-hand smoke.
    - Educate the community on the *Arkansas Child Protection Act of 2006*.
    - Promote area cessation resources along with the Quit Line.
    - Conduct the Annual Operation Storefront project with area youth.
    - Conduct educational presentations to youth and the community.
    - Conduct a Tobacco Retailer Education program.
2. Underage Drinking Prevention Grant 2009
    - Implement an evidence-based model prevention program that has been approved by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
    - Conduct a county-wide comprehensive media campaign to reduce underage drinking in Benton County.
    - Conduct educational presentations for the community.
    - Conduct a "Responsible Beverage Server Training" program.
    - Implement "Talk It Out" nights for area families.
    - Conduct town hall meetings.
3. Drug Free Communities Grant 2009
    - Targeted Substances: Tobacco, Underage Alcohol Use, Prescription Drug Abuse, Methamphetamine, and Cocaine.
    - Conduct a county-wide comprehensive media campaign to prevent and/or reduce the use of the substances listed above.
    - Conduct the 6th Annual Methamphetamine Awareness Month.
    - Conduct educational presentations to youth and the community.
    - Promote Drug Free Workplace policies in area businesses.
    - Conduct a Merchant Flyer Education Program.
4. Communicate with members and the public.
    - Conduct the fifth annual Fit with 5 Worksite Challenge, a fitness challenge promoting a healthier lifestyle for employees of local businesses.
    - Create a web site for the Drug Free Rogers-Lowell Coalition, www.ioit2me.com.

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The Convention & Visitors Bureau's mission is to positively impact the Rogers economy through the promotion of the area as a retail, business and convention destination.

Convention & Visitors Bureau Division Goals:

I. Generate Overnight Visitors. Produce room nights for Rogers' hotels/motels and business for our attractions, restaurants, retailers, etc. Focus sales efforts on new/repeat multi-hotel business that utilizes the convention center as well as groups needing 100 rooms or less.

1. Develop quantifiable and qualified leads for hotels and the convention center.
2. Target SMERF (Sports, Medical, Educational, Religious and Fraternal) and associations groups.
3. Focus on smaller groups that need 100 rooms or less.
4. Create awareness in the local business community in working through the CVB to bring meetings/conventions to Rogers.
5. Create opportunities for the RCVB and our hospitality partners to make sales calls on potential clients in all markets that are our 2009 focus.

II. Meet and Exceed Visitor Needs and Expectations. Enhancing visitors' experiences will encourage repeat visits to Rogers and northwest Arkansas.

1. Establish a competitive advantage by providing exceptional services for all groups serviced by the CVB as it relates to each group.

III. Market Rogers and Northwest Arkansas as a Premiere Destination for Meetings, Events and Group Travel.

1. Develop a yearly marketing plan with input from advertising agency in order to maximize marketing dollars.

IV. Foster Close Working Relationships with All Area Hotels.

1. Partner with the local hotel community to provide additional sales and service support.

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The Membership Services Division of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce attracts new members while providing existing members with the programs, information and services needed to enhance their competitive edge in the marketplace.

Membership Services

Membership Services Division Goals:

I. Attract New Members

1. Attract 400 new members in 2009 to support new goal of 2,100 Chamber members by the end of 2009.

II. Retain Current Members

1. Implement new retention plan which specifically targets member renewals.
2. Encourage member involvement and participation through increased communication from staff and volunteers.

III. Promote the Value of Chamber Membership

1. Host professional development programs, such as FYI Lunch & Learn Seminars, Legislative Forums, and Eggs & Issues, which all offer education to members on business topics.
2. Host business events for members and the community such as Job Fairs, NWA Business Conference, Annual Teacher Appreciation Breakfast & Education Fair and the NWACC Appreciation Luncheon.
3. Provide member networking opportunities which allow them to grow their business by making new contacts, developing existing business relationships, growing their professional network and generating business leads at events such as Business After Hours, Business-to-Business Connection Luncheons, Fiesta de Negocios, Coffee Connection and Third Thursday Coffee in Lowell.
4. Engage new members through New Member Receptions and survey current members to gather feedback on effectiveness of events.
5. Engage Ambassador Committee members to promote Chamber membership growth, event participation and membership retention by functioning as proactive goodwill extension of the Chamber.

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The Government Affairs Division of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce is the communication program between business and government that identifies priorities of business as well as quality-of-life issues. We educate and advocate these priorities of our membership to the proper government body.

Government Affairs

Government Affairs Division Goals:

I. Focus on Local Issues that Can Have a Positive Influence on Business

1. Identify and prioritize issues that are important to our membership.
2. Advocate for infrastructure improvements; identify, monitor and support projects of regional and local significance including the Bella Vista Bypass, Springdale Northern Bypass, I-540 upgrades, and Western Beltway.
3. Support the Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Authority. The establishment and support of this regional transportation agency allows work to begin in putting together financing and implementation/construction plans for regional transportation projects like the Bella Vista Bypass, Springdale Northern Bypass, Western Beltway and I-540 upgrades.

II. Monitor Issues that can be Costly and Unfriendly to Business and Work toward their Elimination and Defeat

1. Identify and prioritize issues that are important to our membership.
2. Work closely with the Arkansas Legislature by attending appropriate committee meetings and brief legislators on the issues that are important to our membership.
3. Work closely with the State Chamber and U.S. Chamber in monitoring state and national issues as they relate back to the membership.

III. Work with Federal, State and Local Government

1. Continue to cultivate existing relationships with federal, state and local government officials along with creating new relationships.
2. Attend appropriate government public meetings.
3. Work closely with the U.S. Congressional Delegation.
4. Advocate the Northwest Arkansas Legislative Agenda for the 87th General Assembly: pursue funds for regional infrastructure projects, increased transportation funding, higher education funding, and general issues in conjunction with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce's Arkansas Legislative Agenda.

IV. Help Guide the Business Community as We Continue to Grow

1. Work with construction and developer companies to address issues by hosting the Annual Developers Conference in which the construction industry may address issues regarding construction and development in the Rogers-Lowell area.
2. Provide staff and resource support to the Northwest Arkansas Chambers and Northwest Arkansas Council.

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V. Get and Keep Members Engaged and Informed in a Timely Manner

1. Send regularly scheduled communication.
2. Schedule and facilitate Government Affairs Committee meetings.
3. Create a state-of-the-art grassroots network that engages and mobilizes Chamber members. Provide information often and in a timely manner that helps us, working together, influence legislative and policy change that accomplishes the end result and provides measurable benefit to our new and existing members.

VI. Create a World-Class School System with Development and Implementation of a Strategic Plan

1. Assist consultants in their work with the community and the school community to create a strategic plan.

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State Legislative Priorities

We support funding to reward regions that have proactively worked to identify funding sources for regional infrastructure projects. A regional mobility fund could also be used to incentivize other regions to establish regional funding strategies for infrastructure projects. Funds could be deposited in a regional mobility fund to assist with:

- Financing of regional transportation projects;
- Funding regional airport improvements.

Increasing Transportation Funding – We support finding additional ways to grow the transportation funding levels. Proposals such as redirecting transportation-related general revenues could become a funding source for regions that have established RMAs. Any incremental transportation funding increases should be distributed within the region in which the funds were generated.

Higher Education Funding – We support the University of Arkansas and NWACC priorities in the higher education funding formulas. We support full funding in the UAMS budget to establish and operate the UAMS–Northwest satellite campus in order to train more medical specialists within the state of Arkansas.

Positions on Other State Legislative Issues

Repeal of Sales Tax on Groceries - We support further repeal of state sales taxes on groceries with any excess funds remain after key infrastructure priorities are fully funded.

Repeal of Sales Tax on Utilities – We support a sales tax exemption for energy used in industry and manufacturing.

Severance Tax – Severance tax revenues should "follow the cars" and be distributed based on need. We oppose any efforts to redirect the recently adopted severance tax revenues to areas other than transportation.

Tort Reform – We support protection of the legal reforms enacted by Act 649 of 2003.

Economic development initiatives – We support the legislative priorities of Accelerate Arkansas and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission to foster the growth of knowledge-based and high-tech jobs in Arkansas. We support economic development incentives that keep Arkansas competitive with other states and encourage job creation through business expansions and relocations here.

Workmen's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance – We support protection of the workers' compensation reforms enacted by Act 796 of 1993. We oppose any legislation that is a detriment to a sound unemployment compensation system. We support protection of the Department of Workforce Services' Employment Security trust fund.

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Immigration – We strongly support comprehensive federal immigration reform that protects U.S. national and economic security. Reform should increase security, addresses delays and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems, and refrains from unduly burdening employers with worker verification systems that are under-funded or unworkable. We need legislation that is fair, meets the needs of our growing economy, and meets the test of common sense.

State Trauma Center – Recognizing that Arkansas is the only state that does not have a Level I Trauma Unit, we support identifying appropriate funding sources for a state trauma center.

Federal Legislative Priorities

Card Check Legislation - In 2009, Congress will reconsider legislation that would remove the secret ballot process for Union elections. This legislation, if enacted, will have a significant and potentially devastating impact on businesses of all sizes.

2009 Appropriation Requests – We support 2009 appropriations request that would provide:

- Funding for I-540 short-term and interim upgrades.
- Funding for renovations to the UAMS-Northwest's Satellite Campus Facility.
- Funding for NWACC to establish the Southern U.S. Region's National Child Protection Training Center, to develop a Business-Entrepreneurship Development Center for Veterans and to establish the Global Business Development Center.

Funds for Infrastructure Projects - The federal government needs to meet or exceed the fiscal year 2009 highway funding guarantees as set forth in SAFETEA-LU to ensure that there is no decrease in federal formula highway funding.

Highway Reauthorization - As Congress begins deliberation of the next six-year highway reauthorization bill, we also strongly support additional federal resources for infrastructure projects. The nation's infrastructure is crumbling as states struggle to maintain their current network of highways and bridges. There are almost no resources available to address the new infrastructure needs in rapidly growing areas like northwest Arkansas.

Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport - We support up to a $7 increase in the Passenger Facility Charge. The current Passenger Facility Charge of $4.50 has not been raised in a number of years although construction costs continue to exponentially increase. The charges are locally imposed and proceeds are spent locally. It is not an "across the board" tax increase. XNA could potentially raise more than $1.4 million that could be used for local projects.

We oppose efforts by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) to include new Aircraft Rescue and Firefighters (ARFF) standards in the House version of the FAA Reauthorization bill. The IAFF proposal would dramatically increase ARFF staffing, training and equipment requirements with apparently little or no regard for the substantial implications that these requirements would

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have on airports, requiring XNA to increase staffing costs by more than $1 million annually. We encourage the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Subcommittee on Aviation to reject the IAFF proposal, which could have a severe impact on airports and their ability to retain commercial air service.

Immigration - We strongly support comprehensive federal immigration reform that protects U.S. national and economic security. Reform should increase security, addresses delays and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems, and refrains from unduly burdening employers with worker verification systems that are under funded or unworkable. We need legislation that is fair, meets the needs of our growing economy, and meets the test of common sense.

Marshallese Healthcare - We support amendments to the 2003 Compact of Free Association (P.L. 108-188) to add Arkansas to the list of "affected jurisdictions" that are eligible for federal funding to assist in caring for resident Marshallese who are in northwest Arkansas legally and making significant economic contributions to Arkansas and to the United States. Presently only Hawaii, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are classified as "affected jurisdictions" despite Arkansas having a large concentration of Marshallese here legally.

Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007 - Collective Bargaining - The cities of Lowell and Rogers are very concerned about the passage of an act that will force municipalities to enter into collective bargaining arrangements with their public safety employees, regardless of state and local laws.

Rogers Municipal Airport - A re-emerging issue will be the addition of radar equipment in our contract control tower. The airport will be requesting an additional DBRITE radar system (Digital Bright Radar Indicator Tower Equipment). This again is a high-priority safety need and would greatly enhance services provided by the Rogers Air Traffic Control Tower.

Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority (NACA) - NACA was formed to provide regional solutions for wastewater treatment, the removal of phosphorus-laden sludge from the watershed, and a comprehensive water-quality monitoring program for the White River, Illinois and Spavinaw watersheds. Member cities believe that a regional solution is the most cost-effective and environmentally-effective method to develop wastewater infrastructure to meet the explosive growth of northwest Arkansas, increasingly costly federal and state environmental requirements, and the more stringent and unrelenting water discharge limits imposed by the state of Oklahoma on surface waters entering its boundaries.

NACA will have up to $30 million in federal funding requests to assist with initial start up costs. EPA estimates $300 billion for wastewater infrastructure and an estimated $277 billion for crumbling water infrastructure needed over the course of the next 10 years in the U.S. We, along with NACA, ask that our Congressional delegation work in Congress to develop a national program for wastewater infrastructure.

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