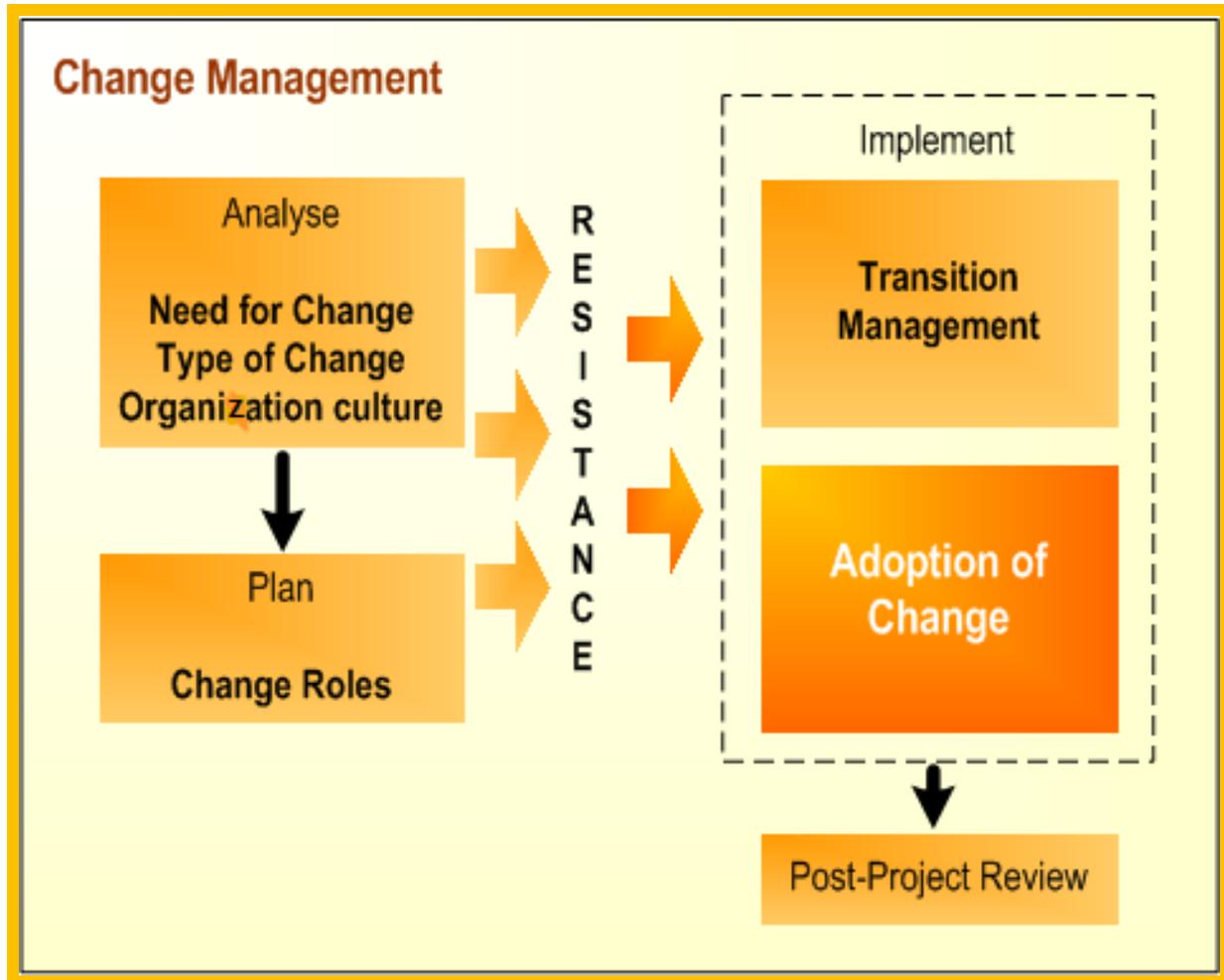


# Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce



## 2012-2015 Strategic Plan

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***Taking Business  
to the Next Level***

# Message from the Chairman

Dear Friends:

In order to flourish and to be focused, most progressive organizations follow a dynamic road map. That is why I insist that the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce develop a strategic plan with the vision of a document that addressed trends, initiatives, revitalization, and economic empowerment as related to the African-American business community and inspiring minority entrepreneurs.

On behalf of the GCAACC's Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the *Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan 2012-2015*. Under the leadership of the board, this document will be used to help steer the directions and energies of the GCAACC for the next three years. Much thought and effort were put into the development of the plan by Chamber members, business leaders, and friends of the GCAACC. I wish to personally thank each person who contributed in the development of the plan. Indeed, it was important to us that all stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in this initial process as we sought input and ownership.

The Chamber is on the move. This is a new day, a new beginning, and a new era for the GCAACC. The Gulf Coast Chamber, more than ever, is positioned to propel to the next level. As such, we aim to assist business owners and inspiring entrepreneurs to take their businesses to the next level.

I invite you to take ownership in and support of the GCAACC's three-year plan. This plan simply encompasses six basic and essential goals that support the GCAACC's mission and vision. With your support and ownership, I am confident that this strategic plan will ensure that our membership organization remains a strong and sustainable voice for African American and minority-owned businesses. As we embark upon our future, the GCAACC purports to be the leading advocate and beacon for minority and small business owners in the areas of economic development, business development, and wealth creation and distribution along the Gulf Coast.

Come with us as we take business to the next level.

*George Hawthorne*

Chairman of the Board

# Vision

*The vision of the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce is to be the beacon for African-American owned businesses and other small and minority business enterprises for economic development, business development, and wealth creation and distribution along the Gulf Coast.*



# Mission

*To serve as an advocate  
and the conscience of the  
African American minority business community and  
other small minority businesses*



*promoting and  
assisting in  
community  
and economic  
development,  
and striving*

*to ensure economic parity.*

## **History of the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce**

The Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1999 by a group of business owners who desired to do business in the black with a mission to provide the resources which will enable its members to prosper and be recognized as a community partner sharing in the wealth of the land. The geographical area of the GCAACC extends throughout Northwest Florida and the Gulf Coast.

The Chamber is a member organization within the Gulf Coast business community and our members are united to create a unique central agency working to improve business and build a better community. Our membership is composed of businesses, individuals, and organizations interested in prospering and creating a healthy environment in which to conduct business to ensure economic empowerment. We are committed to developing, educating, and advocating for the enhancement of the economic status of the Gulf Coast communities by strengthening African American minority businesses and other small minority businesses while creating an environment that produces more successful entrepreneurs.

Since our formation thirteen years ago, we have concentrated our development efforts in the Pensacola communities of Escambia County. The services of the GCAACC are available to the general business community, but its focus is that of African American and other minority citizens historically the minority communities have not benefited from their tax dollars. The GCAACC is the only organization currently focused and positioned to meet the needs of the minority community relative to economic development. Many of our major industries are downsizing or totally dissolving, which is causing more and more workers to choose to create their own businesses.

Through workshops, seminars, and technical assistance to our members, we will constantly strive to serve our members and fulfill our mission to promote and assist in community and economic development to ensure economic parity. The focus of these events is to create civic, industrial, and commercial ventures that are diverse and reflect the views of the Pensacola community.

Historically, chambers of commerce work with both public policymakers and the private sector to create livable, workable communities where competition is constructive. History has not always proven people or events to be fair nor has it witnessed just and equitable policies. We want to learn from history and yearn not to repeat those mistakes, both public and private, that have resulted in dire consequences for our communities. This is a bold undertaking.

We invite you to be bold and join us!

# **Future of the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce**

***Trends. New Initiatives. Revitalization. Progress.*** Where does the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce fit in the future of the Gulf Coast region, particularly in Pensacola? Can the African American business community fully participate in the vast movement occurring on the economic front of growth and development? Are we truly *in the know*?

The future of the GCAACC is projected, in part, through this strategic plan. However, it is not all encompassing, nor should it be. A strategic plan should be a dynamic map that guides an organization through the waves of change – waves that ebb and flow with the economic, political, and social changes of a community. The function of the GCAACC is to be an information resource for members and the community at large providing employment, and economic development information; to provide professional development training; to recruit new businesses and enhance existing businesses. GCAACC is also committed to the encouragement and transition of African American minority businesses and other small minority businesses from the home to the storefront

## **A “Spirit of Inclusion” and Working To Bring the Entire Community Together**

In 2010 the Gulf Coast African-American Chamber of Commerce leadership (“GCAACC”), and key stakeholders (collectively the “GCAACC Strategic Partnership Committee”) engaged in a comprehensive strategic realignment process that consisted of the development of programmatic initiatives to increase the operational capacity and procurement opportunities for minority/female-owned business enterprises (“MFBE”) and small business enterprises (“SBE”) companies in the Pensacola Region by the execution of a strategic partnership agreement with the Greater Pensacola Chamber. In support of developing programmatic initiatives assisting MFBEs and SBEs the GCAACC Strategic Partnership Committee also conducted numerous community meetings throughout 2009 and 2010 seeking community input and recommendations that were included in the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership developed and adopted by the Greater Pensacola Chamber.



## **Business Community Stakeholder Feedback**

The overarching theme of the feedback we received from our community stakeholders focused on increasing Pensacola’s MFBEs’ and SBEs’ capacity, providing business development, technical assistance, and obtaining contract procurement opportunities. Based upon the recommendations received from the community stakeholder meetings of the GCAACC Strategic Partnership Committee, certain programmatic initiatives were developed and implemented under the Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Pensacola Chamber. These programs were developed by Diversity Program Advisors, Inc. (“DPA”), a Pensacola-based company that specializes in the

development, management, implementation and consultation of “diversity inclusion” in the procurement and contracting programs of Federal, State and Local governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and private sector companies and organization and lead by the GCAACC current Chairman.

The GCAACC entered into the GCACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership Agreement (“SPA”) to maintain a Pensacola focus, but also to develop a stronger regional presence, and to assume a greater leadership role in creating systematic change. The GCAACC also wanted the SPA’s programmatic initiatives to become more deliberate about influencing public policy, and expand MBE/SBE companies’ inclusion, influence and impact beyond the non-profit and government sectors to include business and higher education.

### **Development of the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber SPA’s Operational Strategies**

From this thoughtful and in-depth feedback, we developed “operational strategies” which were implemented to achieve GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber SPA’s mission. Each strategy built on different aspects of the GCAACC and Greater Pensacola Chamber organizations’ strengths. Each included different opportunities to address MFBES’ and SBEs’ organizational weaknesses, considering the market and industry trends prevalent in the Pensacola Region, as well as the changing needs of the MFBES and SBEs in which we focus our programmatic efforts. Rather than representing comprehensive roadmaps, the strategies were designed to foster creative discussion and elicit further elaboration and refinement among the GCAACC and Greater Pensacola Chamber staff and Board members.

### **Support of the Greater Pensacola Chamber’s “Vision 2015 Plan” and its goals for MBE development**

“Key outcomes” have been implemented from the “Strategic Partnership Agreement” discussions (between GCAACC and Greater Pensacola Chamber) and based on Greater Pensacola Chamber’s Board Member’s feedback and combined with considerations of City and County elected officials’ debate (regarding the relationship between GCAACC and Greater Pensacola Chamber). These “key outcomes” from the SPA include the development and implementation of a “Minority Business Council” and a strategy for MBE development and assistance as stated in the Greater Pensacola Chamber’s “Vision 2015” plan. The GCAACC fully supports the efforts of the Greater Pensacola Chamber’s efforts for the inclusion and development of MBE’s. The GCAACC’s support and alignment of Greater Pensacola Chamber’s goals and operations create the “linkage” that assists the GCAACC to execute the most strategic themes of the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber SPA program strategies.

Although, **it is the intent of GCAACC Chairman**, to ensure the success of its members the GCAACC has developed a “3-Year Strategic Plan” to be used in conjunction with the most relevant elements of the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber SPA strategy as the “foundation” for GCAACC’s operating policy.

### **Turning Inspiration In To Practice**

GCAACC will remain true to the core fundamental basis of its organizational existence and continue to help build a more economically engaged minority community. GCAACC’s work will focus in those areas that are

central to building economic health in vulnerable minority and small business communities of Pensacola. However, with the assistance Greater Pensacola Chamber, together we will launch programmatic initiatives that will:

- Promote the advancement of MFBEs and SBEs, businesses, and professionals through business development and contract procurement-focused strategies.
- Strengthen systems so that MFBEs and SBEs can realize greater economic opportunities by providing business development and technical assistance.
- Deliver programs that enable MFBEs and SBEs to acquire and preserve financial and business assets.

In the next year, the GCAACC will emerge as a more public and visible advocate of the economic strategies and programs related to the inclusion of MFBEs and SBEs in the development, implementation, management and inclusion in the procurement and contracting programs of Federal, State and Local governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and private sector companies and organizations. We will raise the GCAACC's profile and make our work more accessible to a wider range of decision makers and members by implementing a variety of focused strategies, including:

- Establishing a versatile collaborative partner network
- Approaching our work from a more interdisciplinary perspective
- Measuring the impact of our work through an outcomes-based evaluation approach
- Increasing our work with policy makers for legislative reform
- Including diversity as an additional lens through which we analyze our work
- Placing an increased emphasis on technology and strategic communications

In the following pages you will see an elaboration of the strategies and approaches we will use to ensure that the GCAACC continues to work toward our vision of helping to build a community where MFBEs and SBEs have access to the resources, opportunities, and services they need to become economically secure through the implementation and operation of the GCAACC programmatic initiatives.

**“Why the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership should exist.”**

The GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership intends to implement and operate programmatic initiatives, developed by the GCAACC and the Greater Pensacola Chamber, dedicated to building economic health and opportunity in MFBEs and SBEs. The GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership will partner with a diverse range of community stakeholders to develop innovative strategies and programs that result in systemic change and help MFBEs and SBEs become—and remain—economically secure.

**“What the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership Seeks to Achieve.”**

The GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership envisions a community where MBEs and ALL SBEs have access to the resources, opportunities and services they need to become economically viable. In order for this vision to be realized, MBEs and SBEs must have sufficient procurement opportunities, increased technical assistance, business development assistance, an inclusive market, and increased operating capacity and other economic assets.

**“What the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership Believes.”**

GCAACC’s and Greater Pensacola Chamber’s histories of achievement and their promises for the future are grounded in our commitment to building a sustainable programmatic initiative in the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership. These are the values that will guide the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership as we work toward this vision:

- Access: MFBEs and SBEs should be to participate in contracting and procurement activities within the Pensacola are not prevented from doing so on the basis of the race or gender of their owners.
- Visibility: MFBEs and SBEs need a systematic method for identifying and maintaining an inventory of certified minority and small business enterprises (MBEs and SBEs), their capabilities, services, supplies and/or products.
- Technical Assistance: MFBEs and SBEs must have the tools and resources they need to take an active and informed role in creating positive change in their businesses and communities.
- Innovation: Today's complex economic and social problems facing MFBEs and SBEs require an approach that is multidisciplinary and integrated.
- Information: MFBEs and SBEs need informational and documentary materials (fact sheets, program guides, procurement forecasts, etc.) on contract / subcontract opportunities for MBEs and SBEs.
- Integrity: A strategic, inquiring, and informed perspective promotes high standards of quality and performance.
- Collaboration: Lasting economic opportunity is created when government, business, nonprofits and communities work together.
- Knowledge Sharing: Sustainable development of requires building viable MFBEs and SBEs and sharing collective knowledge.

**“The Focus of the GCAACC’s Work”**

In order to increase the GCAACC/Greater Pensacola Chamber Strategic Partnership’s effectiveness, we have identified three areas in which to concentrate our work:

1. Strengthen “entrepreneurial-development” systems so that MFBEs and SBEs are positioned for greater economic opportunities by the development and implementation of an “Entrepreneurial Development Program.”
2. Develop and strengthen “Technical Assistance” programs that enable MFBEs and SBEs to acquire, accumulate, and preserve business knowledge, financial resources and business assets.
3. Strengthen business networks, capital access and personal relationships between MFBEs and SBEs and Greater Pensacola Chamber membership to ensure that MFBE’s and SBE’s are positioned for economic opportunities by development and implementation of a “Networking and Relationship Development Program.”

We have established six goals within this strategic plan and several strategies for supporting those goals. Over the course of the next three-years, our program focus and priorities will remain constant while our strategies may change depending on the findings of our applied research, the results of our outcome-based program evaluations, and the changing environment. Each year, we will modify existing goals and create new ones that are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-specific (S.M.A.R.T)**.

## **Goal One: Strengthen Economic Development & Growth**

- 1.1 Improve economic development in the African-American community by encouraging small and minority- owned businesses to move into communities targeted by development programs.
- 1.2 Offer small business training to members and customers so that they can increase revenue and profit.
- 1.3 Encourage politicians to ensure parity in funding so that new and existing businesses will be sustainable.
- 1.4 Develop mentor and modeling programs.

## **Goal Two: Improve Access to Capital**

- 2.1 Develop relationships and form partnerships with financial institutions that are willing to work with members.
- 2.2 Develop or provide training in how to develop business plans and financial statements to assess better their financial situations and capital needs and improve management skills.
- 2.3 Create a database of current members with revenue and profit information in order to show strength of members.

## **Goal Three: Transform Community Development**

- 3.1 Train individuals to lead.
- 3.2 Encourage and support organizations that support the African-American community.
- 3.3 Map out existing and future community initiatives and programs and educate members on these trends.

## **Goal Four: Increase Membership**

- 4.1 Create membership and potential membership database.
- 4.2 Develop and execute an aggressive membership campaign.
- 4.3 Develop codes of ethics for members of business sectors.

## **Goal Five: Provide Training and Education**

- 5.1 Assemble an education and training module for members that provide and direct training for start-ups, internal management, product growth, and access to capital.
- 5.2 Train members on customer service.

## **Goal Six: Develop a Fundraising Campaign and Financial Management Plan**

- 6.1 Develop an annual privately funded financial plan to increase Chamber revenues.
- 6.2 Develop internal operating systems of financial integrity, reporting, accounting, auditing.
- 6.3 Seek grants and sponsors for Chamber programs to develop Chamber programmatic income.

# Goal One: Strengthen Economic Development & Growth

The top priority for the Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce is strengthening the economic development of this area while firmly supporting economic growth for its members. To reach this goal, the GCAACC will strive to inform its members about matters that affect them, refer economic and business opportunities to its members, and influence policies and laws that concern them. Member businesses will be monitored and evaluated for changes in business and financial factors influenced by the efforts of the GCAACC.



## Objective 1.1

Improve economic development in the African-American community by encouraging African American owned businesses to move into communities targeted by development programs.

## Objective 1.2

Offer small business training to members and customers so that they can increase their revenue.

## Objective 1.3

Encourage politicians to ensure parity in policies and funding so that new and existing businesses will be sustainable.

## Objective 1.4

Develop mentor and modeling programs.

## Objective 1.1

### Improve economic development in the African-American community.

As industries and people become more mobile, the trend for economic development in certain areas tends to vary with the mobility. It is simply supply and demand. How do mobility and the factors of supply and demand affect the African American business community? What industries really work for the African American community? What industries work against us and try to exploit our labor, money, and assets?

Historically, African American business owners in Escambia County have excelled in the services, construction and retail industries. The growth trend for these industries is positive; yet, diversification is necessary, even critical, to our continued success and hope for the future.

In order to complete this economic development object, viewing historical data and assessing trends is crucial. The Chamber wants to ensure that we place businesses in our communities that will enjoy a positive reciprocal relationship, both financially and socially. We want to inform business owners interested in relocating to our area of the incentives offered and advantages gained. And we want to grow with them so that they become a model for the next generation to succeed – right around the corner from where they live.

## Strategies for Objective 1.1

**Assess feasibility of existing economic development programs.** There currently exists a myriad public and private programs aimed at increasing economic development opportunities. In order to ascertain the benefits of these programs for the members of the GCAACC, it is necessary to assess these programs for the feasible application by our members. By 2012, this report will be provided to the membership.

**Designate targeted businesses that will have a positive impact in the African-**

**American communities and for African-Americans.** The Chamber recognizes that although all businesses are relevant to the economy, not all businesses are important to the economy in the African American community or have a positive impact on African Americans. By 2013, the GCAACC will publish a guideline with associated data and indicators in order to inform its members and the general public about targeted businesses and industries for which the GCAACC will work to increase its presence in our communities.

**Develop and disseminate a marketing campaign to targeted businesses.** Through its advocacy efforts, the GCAACC will work with area industry, political, and community leaders to encourage targeted businesses to migrate to our communities. By developing an intense marketing campaign to these businesses by 2013, we will afford our members and these businesses the opportunity to increase economic development and growth.



## Objective 1.2

Offer small business training to members and customers so that they can increase their revenue and profit.

Economic development initiatives work when people work. Within that reality, it is imperative that training programs remain tuned to the ever-changing needs of all businesses. The consequences of lagging in our training efforts can have an astronomical effect on the ability of our businesses to compete locally and globally. Our goal for training is simple – to positively impact our members' revenue and profit.

### Strategies for Objective 1.2

**Partner with trainers and companies through targeted and collaborative efforts.** This strategy takes advantage of existing human resources and systems, both internal and external, which can deliver various training products to our members. Our members need access to legal, financial, and business expertise in order to strengthen their businesses. This four-step process includes: 1) diversifying the current database of partners, 2) examining other models for use in future training sessions, 3) matching partners with training use, and 4) organizing members into industry sectors to serve as advocates.



**Create industry specific training.** Specialized courses are often necessary for a variety of skills and aptitudes needed in many industries. Recognizing this training niche, we want to first measure the effectiveness of the current training, track the outcomes, install guidelines and expectations, and then broaden the current training as required. Having a complete evaluation also provides us with the option to expand our pilot programs to state, regional, and national levels.

**Develop long-range training module for membership.** Planning for future growth is imperative, and after conducting a needs assessment from the general membership and the community to ascertain training that needs to occur, we can then establish a financial plan for funding of future training.

**Establish measurement and evaluation guidelines for all training programs.** Although training needs vary, the need to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the training program remains a constant requirement. By 2013, a simple measurement and evaluation tool should be in place so that we can ensure the quality of training programs being delivered to our members exceeds the real costs of delivering those programs.

### Objective 1.3

Encourage political leaders to ensure parity in policies and funding so that new and existing businesses will be sustainable.

In our free market economic system, competition is encouraged for the good of individual and corporate wealth. In our democratic political system, cooperation is encouraged for the good of the public. While these two systems may, on the surface, appear separate, they in fact jointly perform a delicate balancing act. While business owners take care to manage their businesses, the GCAACC should function as a watchdog for local, state, and national policies and economic issues that affect our members.

### Strategies for Objective 1.3

**Set up a committee, by 2012, to lead efforts that will serve as an economic watchdog to monitor business conditions and policies that affect the African American community.**

**Increase member participation on public and civic committees.** After an informal, initial survey, all members should be encouraged to participate in public policy issues by joining or frequently attending governmental, educational, and civic meetings.



**Identify political stakeholders for each effort, i.e., economic development, training, and community development.**

Stakeholders with viable interests and influence should be identified along with their historical views and, when appropriate, voting records.

**Identify current and future funding sources.** Local, state, and national funding sources, both public and private, should be identified and catalogued for Chamber and member sources of revenue. This on-going effort should be updated quarterly beginning in October 2012.

**Objective 1.4**  
**Develop mentor and modeling programs.**

Perhaps the best example of how economic development works can be gained from capitalizing on the business and financial experiences of others. Wise counsel (mentoring) and patterning (modeling) can be found internal and external to the GCAACC.

### Strategies for Objective 1.4

**Identify successful current members and partner them with a Greater Pensacola Chamber member businesses.** By 2013, new Chamber members should, within three months of their membership date, be allied with an existing Greater Pensacola Chamber member who has a successful, viable business.

**Develop external modeling program for members for when members do not have an internal business to model.** Oftentimes, businesses with niche markets or specialized sector businesses may find it more advantageous look outside the GCAACC body for modeling opportunities. By making this option available to members, the GCAACC encourages economic growth through the modeling of successful, viable businesses wherever they are.

**Set up a member recognition program to highlight member accomplishments.** Recognizing that members make great strides, the GCAACC will establish a program to showcase their accomplishments.



to

## Goal Two: Improve Access to Capital

One of the largest financial factors in sustaining a business is the availability of capital sources when the business needs it. While the inability to obtain capital can be a problem for all businesses, African American owned businesses often experience additional barriers based on financial industry perceptions. It is also incumbent on the individual business to ascertain financial documentation and maintain a stable financial history in order to minimize self-induced barriers. The objectives for this goal are based on two factors – healthier external financial relations and stronger internal financial and business management.

### Objective 2.1

Develop relationships and form partnerships with financial institutions that are willing to work with members.

### Objective 2.2

Develop or provide training in how to develop business plans and financial statements to assess better their financial situations and capital needs and improve management skills (human resources, capital, internal).

### Objective 2.3

Create a database of current members with revenue and profit information in order to show strength of members.



## Objective 2.1

Develop relationships and form partnerships with financial institutions that are willing to work with members.

Traditional financial institutions have an apprehension about lending to African American owned businesses; yet, these institutions house the business owners' revenues and profits. Can the combined financial power of our members' revenue be leveraged in order to reverse this trend? Are there lending alternatives for our members? What must our members do internally to ensure their own economic prosperity?

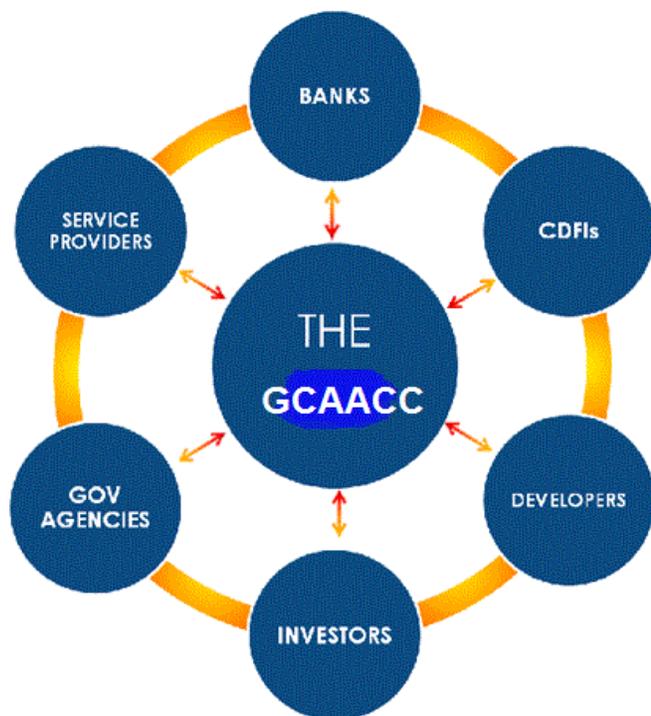
The Chamber, through its vast network system, has the ability to lead the economic empowerment efforts in the African American business community. It should capitalize on this ability by using all available economic and financial resources that are willing to maintain a positive relationship with our members.

### Strategies for Objective 2.1

**Profile financial institutions for partnership opportunities.** Developing allies is a critical requirement. Therefore, within 2012, the GCAACC will compile a list of traditional financial institutions that have a history of working with the African American business community and those that have a serious commitment to working with the African American business community.

**Research alternative lending programs for members.** Various non-traditional lending alternative programs are offered through microlenders, venture capitalists, private investors, and community development financial institutions (CDFI). Within 2012, the GCAACC will compile a list of these financial resources.

**Conduct workshops using internal trainers, financial institutions, and external service providers.** Starting in 2012, the GCAACC will direct training for its members about the traditional and non-traditional financial institution requirements for lending. This training will also highlight the importance of continuing the financial relationship once the capital is obtained.



## Objective 2.2

Develop or provide training in how to develop business plans and financial statements to assess better their financial situations and capital needs and improve management skills.

Just as important as developing financial relationships external to the business owner, it is proportionately important to develop financial and management skills internal to the business owner. Planning for natural growth and future expansion, as well as keeping a finger on the pulse of the businesses' internal financial and business practices, are two factors in the assessment of the financial health of the business. The Chamber is committed to continual training programs that provide the knowledge and skills to its members that will help keep our businesses healthy.

### Strategies for Objective 2.2

**Assess existing programs and match these with member needs.**

Several external training service providers deliver



programs that provide basic and advanced business and financial skills. In 2012, the GCAACC will assess these programs and our members' needs and disseminate the availability of these programs.

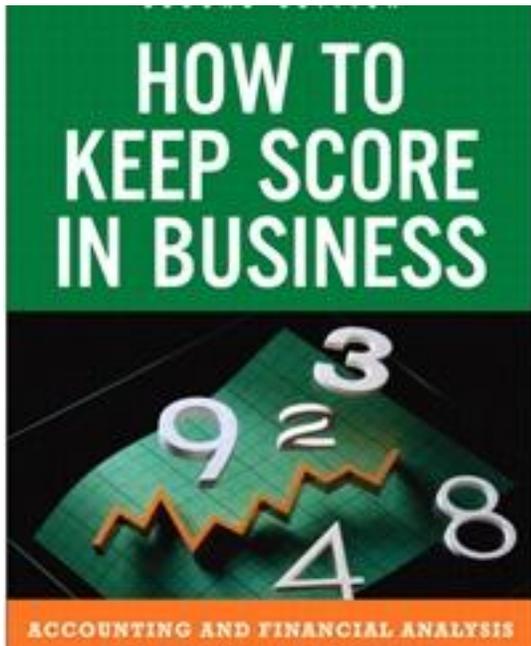
**Conduct workshops.** Where necessary to address and apply knowledge and skills in a manner specific to our members' experience and requirements, the GCAACC will periodically conduct workshops.

**Create an Internet database and links to financial institutions and training resources.** By 2013, the GCAACC will create a database and links that direct our Internet users to those financial institutions and training resources that can assist them with their business plans and skills and the various management tools necessary for strong and viable businesses.

### Objective 2.3

Create a database of members with revenue and profit information.

There is strength in numbers! When we pool our resources and leverage our assets, true empowerment starts to take form. Knowing what we have, or assessing our resources, is just as vital as knowing who has it, assessing our members. Our members then benefit from the collective bargaining efforts of the GCAACC and the GCAACC in turn benefits from the collective bargaining power to the financial institutions. These benefits then spill over into our local economy as the financial resources began the journey into our communities and return as increased tax dollars, more business profits, and sustainable businesses. There is power in numbers!



### Strategies for Objective 2.3

**Survey current members for revenue and profit information.** Ascertaining the financial data of our members is the critical first step. By 2013, the GCAACC will have in place a database of member financial data that reflects current year revenue and profit information.

**Update membership application to detract financial information.** Revising the GCAACC's membership application, in 2012, will ensure the accumulation of the revenue and profit information.

## Goal Three: Transform Community Development

The workplace has changed. The homeplace is changing. How then do you transform communities when the workplace and the homeplace are constant dynamic environments? What tools do you use to bridge the gap between economic and social capacities without losing the intent of either one? Recognizing that personal wealth is just as important as business wealth, the GCAACC has challenged itself to transform community development – the fiber that keeps our communities intact – by working with neighborhoods, civic and social organizations, and businesses to develop our communities into strong threads of leadership, knowledge, and self-sufficiency.

### Objective 3.1

Train individuals to lead.

### Objective 3.2

Encourage and support organizations that support the African American community.

### Objective 3.3

Map out existing and future community development initiatives and programs and educate members on these trends.



## Objective 3.1 Train individuals to lead.

Developing residents into entrepreneurs is an overwhelming task. Developing residents into citizens who will lead other citizens, organizations, and businesses is a necessary task. We must train our residents to use their power and influence to affect change that will affect us all. We must educate our younger residents today about the responsibility they have to lead our communities tomorrow. We must remind our older residents about the skills they learned yesterday that can lead us today. This is where our wealth lies.

### Strategies for Objective 3.1

**Tap into existing leadership programs.** Several effective local, state, and national leadership programs exist that have curriculum designed to foster leadership skills. The GCAACC will actively encourage and support these programs by soliciting the participation of our community members.

**Conduct leadership forums.** Within the membership and network of the GCAACC, there exists a wealth of leaders who can provide information and skills to our community's members? Through the development of internal leadership programs, we can equip our residents with the aptitude to lead and the attitude to succeed.



**Implement a leadership program for young entrepreneurs.** African American youths must see African American role models at work and understand how to develop their internal capacities for future entrepreneurial endeavors. By 2014, the GCAACC will develop and implement a program that will direct our youths on how to create and distribute personal, community, and economic wealth.

**Objective 3.2**  
**Encourage and support organizations that support the African American community.**

Our communities have a vast network of organizations that use their assets to mobilize the community on political, educational, environment, social, and civic issues. These organizations encourage their members to actively participate in the communities in which they live and work. They revitalize our spirits. They renew our commitment to each other. They remind us to talk to our neighbors. They are our eyes and ears to change.

As we build our communities' leaders, we must take a wholistic approach to our efforts. Yet, we recognize that we cannot do this alone. The Chamber will actively encourage and support these organizations so that they can continue to sustain our communities.

### Strategies for Objective 3.2

**Join organizations mutually beneficial to the GCAACC.** Through being an active member of organizations that sustain communities through various advocacy efforts, the GCAACC strengthens its goal to transform community development. These organizations also benefit by exposing their mission to a broader audience.



**Develop a recognition program for organizations.** Appreciating our community organizations' distinguishing actions is paramount to encouraging them to continue and provides another outlet for these groups to market their mission. Beginning in 2013, the GCAACC will develop a recognition program through our public relations channels that highlights our network of organizations and the good work that they accomplish.

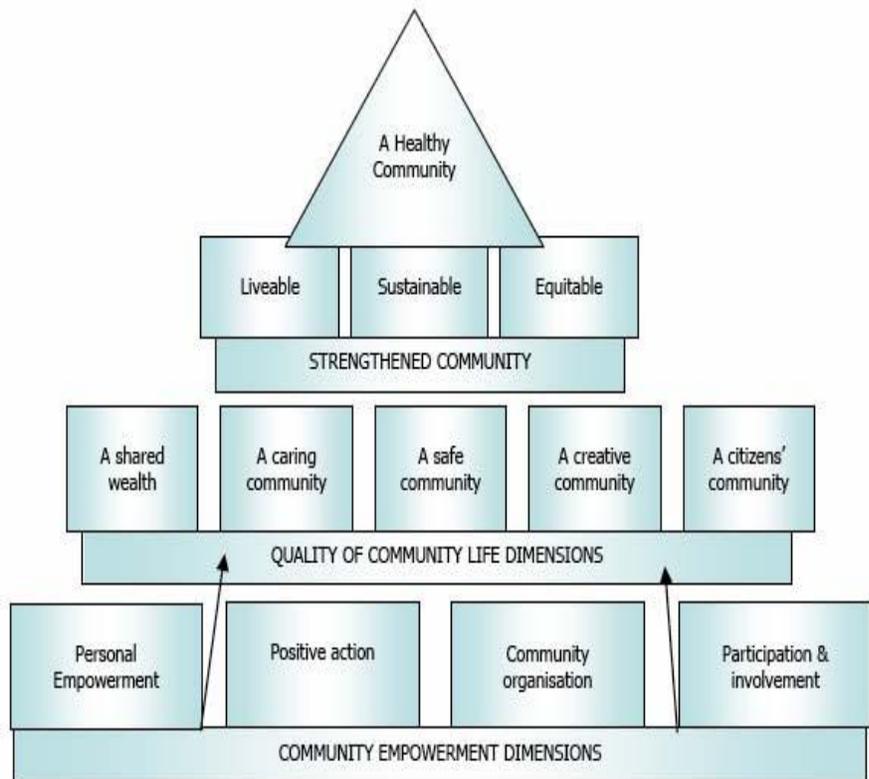
**Objective 3.3**  
 Map out existing and future community initiatives and programs and educate members on these trends.

Many public, private, and grassroots led initiatives exist in our area that enhances community development. These initiatives range from transforming brownsfield areas to highlighting cultural heritage to fighting for civic justice to championing for affordable housing. Diverse issues encourage diverse change. We want to educate our members and communities on these initiatives and trends so that they can make informed choices.

**Strategies for Objective 3.3**

**Survey existing community development initiatives.** Obtaining a database of the existing initiatives and programs requires a dynamic team of both Chamber members and community members. By 2013, the GCAACC will have an active committee that serves as the "eyes and ears" to gather this information.

**Publicize meetings and information.** Informing our communities about the existence of these initiatives and programs provides another avenue to disseminate the information about the meetings in order to have opportunities to receive information and provide input.



# Goal Four: Increase Membership

The Chamber is a member organization within the Gulf Coast business community and our members are united to create a unique central agency working to improve business and build a better community. Our membership is composed of businesses, individuals, and organizations interested in prospering and creating a healthy environment in which to conduct business to ensure economic empowerment. We are committed to developing, educating, and advocating for the enhancement of the economic status of the Gulf Coast communities by strengthening African American and minority businesses while creating an environment that produces more African American entrepreneurs.

We cannot do this without members. Therefore, the GCAACC has as its fourth goal to increase its membership ranks with members who are committed to our mission. And we must be committed to our members.

## Objective 4.1

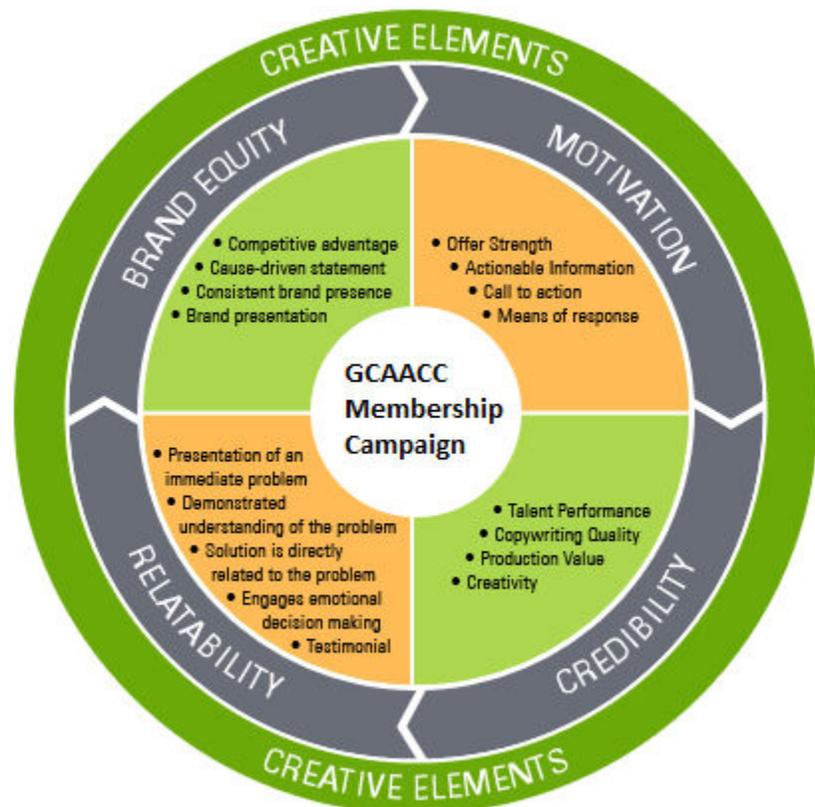
Create membership and potential membership database.

## Objective 4.2

Develop and execute an aggressive membership campaign.

## Objective 4.3

Develop codes of ethics for members of business sectors.



**Objective 4.1**  
**Create membership and potential membership database.**

Maintaining updated and accurate information about our membership affects the organizational health of the GCAACC. Continuously canvassing individuals, businesses, and organizations ensures that our organizational and economic well being will be sustained and poised for growth. Doing both helps us to appreciate that our chamber, like others, will have a dynamic membership roster.

**Strategies for Objective 4.1**

**Update existing membership database to reflect current member status.** This should be an immediate course of action in order to ascertain the standing of our member database.



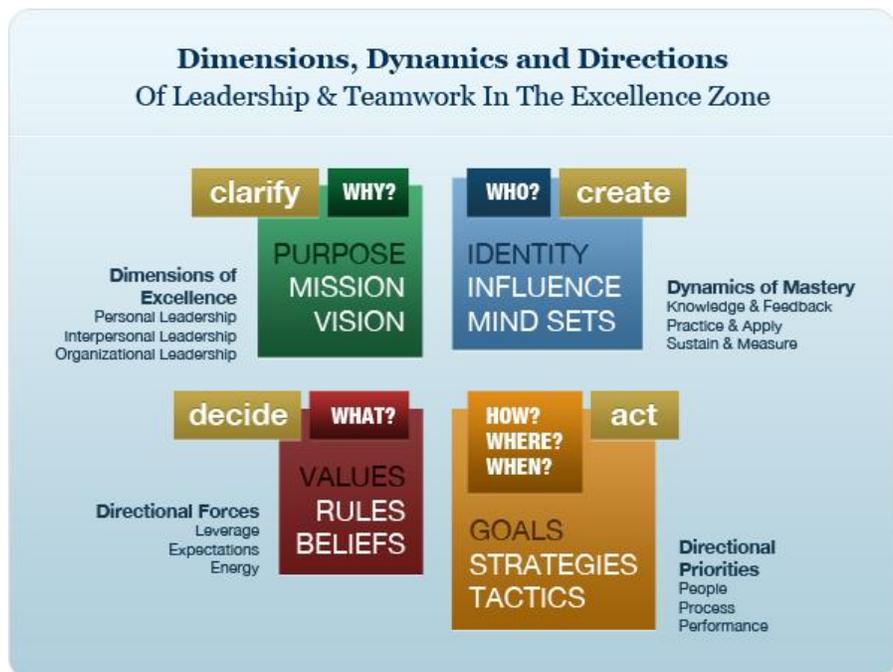
**Develop a prospective member database.** Potential members of the GCAACC have a wealth of information that can be accumulated in order to pair the advantages to their needs with the benefits of Chamber membership. Establishing a prospective member database and compiling information should be implemented in 2012.

Objective 4.2  
 Develop and execute an aggressive membership campaign.

There are many advantages to being a member of the GCAACC – business opportunities, a vast network of potential mentors and customers, and a professional organization that advocates and builds alliances for you. And these are just a few! Getting the word out about the GCAACC is crucial to our continued success. Through personal and public membership campaign, our members will become *the GCAACC*.

Strategies for Objective 4.2

**Encourage members to be a committee of one.** This type of targeted membership campaign is oftentimes the most effective and should be highly encouraged. Through a personal representative crusade, current members will establish individual goals for new members and will receive motivation through recognition and incentives.



**Conduct membership drives.** Periodic and well-planned membership drives can be the catalyst for gathering a mass number of members through broad public relations efforts. Beginning in 2012, the GCAACC will start these membership drives with a goal of increasing membership by a pre-established percent.

**Objective 4.3**  
**Develop codes of ethics for members of business sectors.**

Chamber members come from many business sectors, including service, retail, wholesale, construction, and financial, and meeting the needs of each of these sectors is a critical aspect of the GCAACC. Each sector may have specific principals and values which govern their business conduct. Within the organizational structure of the GCAACC, it is our objective to develop member-driven codes of ethics for these sectors using the same principle on which this nation was founded – *by the people, for the people.*

### Strategy for Objective 4.3

**Create ad hoc committees for business sectors.** Oftentimes, business sectors have specific industry standards for codes of ethics to which business owners adhere. By creating ad hoc committees for these sectors, the GCAACC encourages a sense of autonomy within a larger, supportive network of business associates.



## **Goal Five: Provide Education and Training**

*Knowledge is power* is a widely expected phrase encourage individuals to fully develop their capacities. With the mission of the GCAACC to assist in community and economic development and strive for economic parity, it is critically important to educate our members about business, financial, and economic issues that affect them and train our members about business, financial, and economic skills that are necessary for them. Providing education and training encompasses a wide breadth of resources and networks, both internal and external, that the GCAACC will use increase the knowledge base of our members.

### **Objective 5.1**

Assemble an education and training module for members that provide and direct training for start-ups, internal management, product growth, and access to capital.

### **Objective 5.2**

Train members on business management, financial accountability and customer service.



### Objective 5.1

Assemble an education and that provide and direct training for start-ups, internal management, product growth, and access to capital.

Increasing the financial and management capacities of our members starts with providing the information and skills necessary for a strong business foundation. To that end, the GCAACC will assemble education and training modules targeted towards start-ups, internal management, product growth, and access to capital. These modules will be used as templates to guide our members through the maze of practices, standards, and laws used in the business community.

### Strategies for Objective 5.1

**Partner with existing service providers to create training opportunities for members.** The Chamber will partner with a variety of trainers and educational service providers to increase the knowledge base of our members. This continued effort will begin immediately and be an integral part of our educational and training component. Members will be informed of these partnerships and opportunities through our internal communications channels.



**Create targeted training through seminars and classes.** Member needs will drive educational opportunities that we will lead internally. By 2013, we will implement a host of opportunities that range from professional development seminars to continuing education classes.

**Objective 5.2**  
**Train members on customer service.**

Pleasing the customer increases the chances that a business owner creates loyalty. It could also translate into increased revenue. In this age of instant gratification, how do you meet customer expectations without compromising your integrity? Which customer service issues are lagging and need refining? Are your customer service skills increasing your profit margin?

This objective intentionally focuses solely on customer service because of the wide chasm of understanding – and misunderstanding – about what defines good customer service. We want our members to lead the pack and reflect the professional courtesies to their customers that their customers deservedly expect.

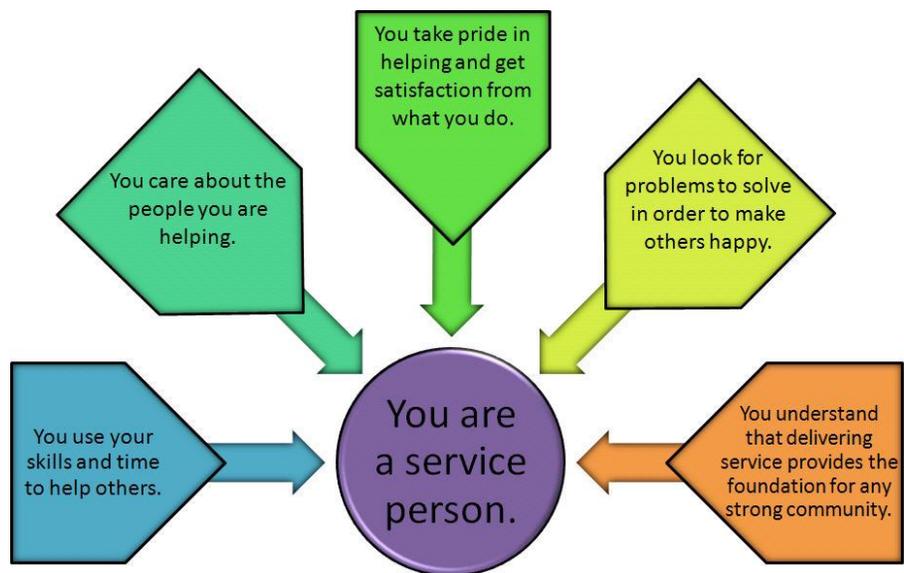
**Strategies for Objective 5.2**

**Conduct training focused solely on customer service.**

Beginning in 2012, the GCAACC will host training segments on customer service. These interactive segments will ensure that our members are well equipped to succeed and serve those who purchase their goods and services.

**Develop a mystery shop program for use by members.**

The Chamber will encourage members to use a chamber-developed questionnaire and guidelines for a customer service feedback program. We will also have preventative and corrective tools and techniques that our members can use to qualify their efforts. Members who successfully use the program will be motivated by our reward and recognition program.



## Goal Six: Develop a Fundraising Campaign and Financial Management Plan

AS MORE AND MORE nonprofits explore new avenues for revenue, many are weighing the benefits and challenges of collaborating with for-profit entities. Because this type of collaboration can provide access to sources of capital that are not typically available to a nonprofit, it can be an attractive option to those who know how to properly structure the partnership. For those who don't, the partnership can lead to failure, compromised mission, and dissatisfied employees. Fundraising and financial management encompasses a wide breadth of resources and networks, both internal and external, that the GCAACC will use to increase the GCAACC's self-sufficiency.

### Objective 6.1

Develop an annual privately funded financial plan to increase Chamber revenues.

### Objective 6.2

Develop internal operating systems of financial integrity, reporting, accounting, auditing.

### Objective 6.3

Seek grants and sponsors for Chamber programs to develop Chamber programmatic income.



## Objective 6.1

Seek grants and sponsors for Chamber programs to develop Chamber programmatic income.

Increasing the financial revenues for operations of the GCAACC starts with providing the financial plans and resources necessary for a strong business foundation. To that end, the GCAACC will develop programs and programmatic business models targeted towards corporate partners, foundations and other donors to access capital for the GCAACC's operations. These programs and programmatic business models will be used as income producing initiatives to guide our organization through the maze of practices, standards, and laws used in the donor community.

### Strategies for Objective 6.1

**Partner with the Greater Pensacola Chamber to create funding opportunities for the GCAACC.** The GCAACC will partner with a variety of Greater Pensacola Chamber businesses and educational service providers to increase the knowledge base of our organization. This continued effort will begin immediately and be an integral part of our fundraising and financial management plan component. Members will be informed of these partnerships and opportunities through our internal communications channels.



**Create targeted fundraising strategies and donors.** Fundraising strategies will drive our donor opportunities that we will lead internally. By 2013, we will implement a host of fundraising opportunities that range from corporate partnerships and philanthropic grants.

**Objective 6.2**  
**Develop internal operating systems of financial integrity, reporting, accounting, auditing.**

Financial accountability increases the GCAACC’s financial credibility. It could also translate into increased donor revenue. In this age of scarce and diminishing donor resources, how do you meet donor expectations without compromising your financial integrity? Which financial reporting and accountability issues are lagging and need refining? Are your donor service skills increasing your chances of funding?

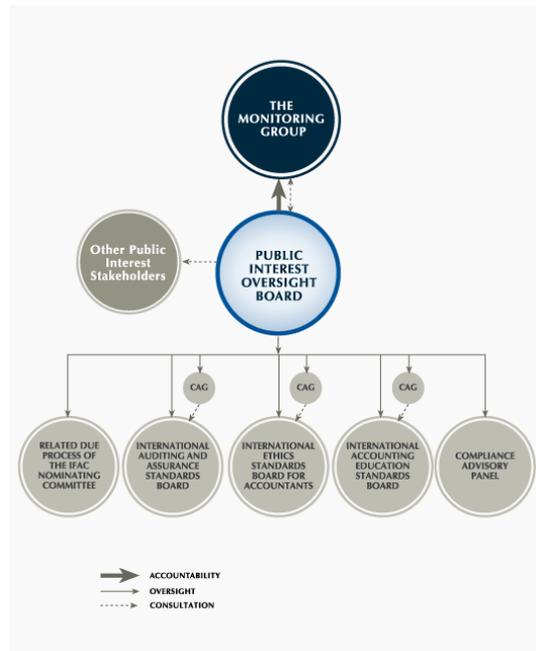
This objective intentionally focuses solely on the GCAACC’s financial accountability because of the wide chasm of understanding – and misunderstanding – about what defines good financial management practices. We want our organization to lead the pack and reflect the financial integrity to our donors/partners that our donors/partners deservedly expect.

**Strategies for Objective 6.2**

**Conduct training focused solely on financial accountability and fiscal management.** Beginning in 2012, the GCAACC will host training segments on financial accountability and fiscal management. These interactive training segments will ensure that our organization is well equipped to succeed and serve those who fund our operations.

**Develop a financial accounting and fiscal management system for use by the GCAACC.**

The financial accounting and fiscal management system should be able to trace all the stages of the transaction processing from budget releases, commitment, purchase, payment request, reconciliation of bank statements, and accounting of expenditure. This allows a comprehensive picture of budget execution. This system must provide the information to ensure improved efficiency and effectiveness of our financial management. Generally, increased availability of comprehensive financial information on current and past performance assists budgetary control and improved economic forecasting, planning, and budgeting.



### Objective 6.3

Seek grants and sponsors for Chamber programs to develop Chamber programmatic income.

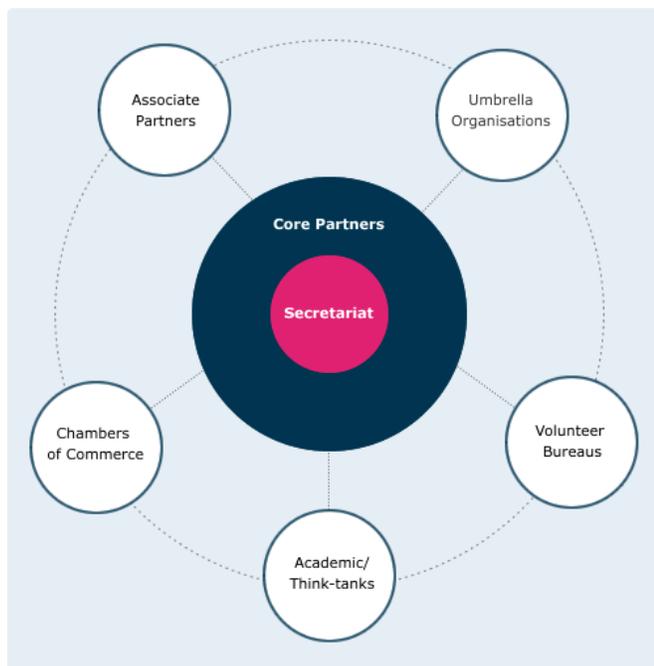
Increasing the fiscal resources and financial capacity of our organization starts with providing the information and skills necessary for an effective program delivery and the generation of programmatic income. To that end, the GCAACC will assemble grant writing professionals, develop strategic partnerships and execute programmatic initiatives designed to attract sponsors, generate program income, and increase access to capital. These efforts will be used as templates to guide our program operations through the use of the best-practices, standards, and operations used in the program service providers community.

### Strategies for Objective 6.3

**Partner with existing service providers to create programmatic opportunities for members.**

The Chamber will partner with a variety of trainers and educational service providers to develop programs that will increase the knowledge base of our members. This continued effort will begin immediately and be an integral part of our programmatic, educational and training components. Members will be informed of these programmatic initiatives and business development opportunities through our internal communications channels.

**Create programmatic income through seminars and classes.** Member needs will drive educational opportunities that we will lead internally. By 2013, we will implement a host of programs and business opportunities that will range from professional development seminars to continuing education classes.



*Taking Business to the Next Level*



# **Gulf Coast African American Chamber of Commerce**