



# Strategic Plan

Of the Neligh Chamber of Commerce

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## Executive Summary

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The Neligh Chamber of Commerce has spent the last several years in a period of transition from a Chamber of Events to a true Chamber of Commerce. To help ease this transition and provide the groundwork and parameters needed to make this possible, the Strategic Planning Committee of the Neligh Chamber of Commerce has developed this Strategic Plan which serves to outline the new direction of the Chamber for the next three years. This is a fluid document and may be subject to changes as necessary but provides a framework to guide Chamber decisions and actions for the next three years. The documents strives to meet the high standards set by the Vision Statement. The plan is divided into four categories (Educate, Support, Invest, and Achieve) that correlate with the Chamber's new direction and its Mission Statement. This document was prepared by the Strategic Planning Committee then amended and approved by the Neligh Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.



## Vision of Success

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This Vision Statement provides an outline of that which the Neligh Chamber of Commerce endeavors to achieve daily:

- ◆ The Chamber is the premier organization in Neligh for business support, education, advocacy, and resources.
- ◆ The Neligh Chamber is so relevant that it sets the bar of “business cool” and Chamber membership is an integral piece to every business’s success. Chamber events are viewed as “cannot miss” due to the invaluable networking opportunities they present. Neligh businesses cannot thrive without partaking in the plethora of fun and educational events hosted by the Chamber.
- ◆ Clearly defined expectations which support and grow Neligh into a vibrant economy.
- ◆ The Neligh Chamber of Commerce will foster a strong economy through partnerships with Neligh Economic Development Office, the City of Neligh, and other state and local entities.

## Mission Statement

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**Educate. Support. Invest. Achieve.**

Educate our Members. Support the Business Community. Invest in Neligh. Achieve Greatness Together.

**Slogan:**

In Business Together.

# Critical Success Factors

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## Educate

As mentioned in the Chamber's Mission Statement above, educating our members is one key factor to the success of the Chamber. As a business owner, re-investing in yourself is often not top priority but to "Achieve Greatness" it must be a top priority. The Chamber's roll in this will be to offer discounted and "business cool" training events that will entice business owners to either attend themselves or send valuable employees in their stead. Cost effective, relevant, and "business cool" trainings will work to encourage Chamber Members to invest in themselves while networking and learning from fellow small business owners.

## Support

The primary role of the Chamber has always and will continue to be to support and foster the growth of the business community in Neligh. For this reason, continuing and expanding the current support efforts is paramount to the success of both the Chamber and the business climate in Neligh.



## Invest

In community development there is no maintaining the status quo. You are either grow or die, there is no middle ground. The Chamber will take an active role to foster investment in Neligh through achieving the three other tenants of the mission statement as well as forming strong local, regional, and state partnerships. Investment in the Chamber means that members are invested and dedicated to furthering the development of Neligh.

## Achieve

The Chamber is only as good as its weakest link. Cooperation and collaboration are critical to forming a strong Chamber which will in turn foster economic development. Neligh is positioned well to "Achieve Greatness Together," however, greatness cannot be achieved without a cooperative effort. Fostering this sense of "Togetherness" will be a key factor in the success or failure of the Chamber. We cannot become "business cool" without the buy-in of our members and must work tirelessly to achieve that.

# Strategies and Action Objectives

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## Educate

**Quarterly Trainings:** The Chamber will provide at least quarterly trainings at a discounted price to members. Trainings will be relevant and cover a wide range of topics that will augment the business climate in Neligh. The Strategic Planning Committee will be primarily responsible for partnering with local, regional, and state organizations such as Neligh Economic Development Office, Northeast Community College, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, Department of Economic Development, or other state agencies to find relevant and effective training topics. As a benefit to Chamber Members and to establish its “business cool” reputation, the Chamber will offer classes at a discount to Chamber Members while keeping them open to non-Chamber Members, however, at a higher rate.

- ◆ **Lunch and Learns:** One effective way to present the quarterly trainings will be through the development of a Lunch and Learn program. Short training sessions (20-30 minutes) will be held during the lunch hour. These will either be held at a local restaurant where affordable lunch can be easily provided or the Chamber will provide affordable lunch options at a suitable location.

**Transportation:** It may not always be feasible to attract affordable, high quality trainings to Neligh. For this reason, the Chamber will help to inform and coordinate transportation to high quality regional training events.

**Communication:** The Chamber will, to the best of its ability, keep its members up to date on information that effects the business climate in Neligh. This may be in the form of local, state, or regional information. The Chamber will do so by forming a strong relationship with Neligh Economic Development Office and other regional entities. To encourage communication the Chamber will look at different mediums of communication. Once staff is hired the Chamber will implement a monthly newsletter.

## Support

**Promote Business:** Promotion of the positive business climate is one of the primary functions of the Chamber. This will be achieved by ensuring Neligh is represented well on the web through an official website which will be updated on a regular basis. The Chamber will maintain a Facebook and Twitter page that will be used to promote not only “business cool” Chamber Events but also community events that showcase Neligh in a positive light. The Chamber and Chamber Members will make it a priority to do business with Chamber Members first and secondly non-Chamber local businesses before looking elsewhere.

**Advertising Support:** The Chamber will look into ways to actively advertise for Chamber businesses. This may come in many forms but will fall under the guise of the Retail Trade Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee. These two committees will look to brainstorm ways to market not only the Chamber but individual Chamber businesses as well. Some thought has already been given to this, see ideas below:

- ◆ **Chamber Spotlight** – in partnership with the Chamber Coffee program, the hosting Chamber Member will be featured on the Second and Fourth weeks. The feature business will be spotlighted on the Chamber’s Facebook Page with a short write up about their business.
- ◆ **Drive-In Marketing** – a potential partnership with the TK Drive-In could be established to promote Chamber businesses at this one of a kind Nebraska venue.
- ◆ **Home Show** – In an effort to effectively advertise for Chamber Members, a Home Show should be organized in order to provide a venue to showcase goods and services. The Home Show will be open to all Neligh businesses but there should be a significant savings to Chamber members. This will actively support the business climate in Neligh while increasing the “business cool” brand of the Chamber.

**Quality of Life:** The Chamber will continue to organize and promote the “small stuff” that makes Neligh a great place to live. This will come primarily in the form of holiday events. However, in keeping with the move away from a



Chamber of Events – the Chamber should explore developing partnerships with other community organizations as to not burn out Chamber Board Members.

**Big Bucks:** The Chamber will strive to cultivate its innovative Big Bucks Program. In the first four months of the Big Bucks Program, the Chamber sold over \$12,000 worth of Big Bucks. In the first five months, over \$8,000 Big Bucks have been redeemed at participating Chamber Businesses. Big Bucks are important to supporting

Neligh’s business climate because it ensures money stays in Neligh. This money must not only be spent in Neligh but can only be spent at Chamber businesses ... yet another way to achieve “business cool.”

## Invest

**Partnerships:** The Chamber will form and maintain strong partnerships with both the City of Neligh and the Neligh Economic Development Office. These local partnerships will invest the Chamber in the community. According to the Chamber Membership, Chamber support of economic development is the number one priority of the Chamber. This unbreakable partnership will foster investment in Neligh for decades to come.

**Grant Program:** In an effort to keep the quality of life in Neligh healthy, the Chamber should look to either partner with other organization to implement some sort of local grant making body or implement one by themselves. Charitable giving is a must in Neligh. An un-restricted endowment could take some of the fundraising burden off the civic organizations in Neligh. The Chamber must look to implement some sort of charitable giving program whether that be partnering with the Neligh Area Community Foundation or starting a new foundation that will actively pursue financial investment in Neligh.

**Grow Neligh Committee:** The Chamber will form a Grow Neligh Committee. The committee will meet once a month, on the third Tuesday of the month, at one of the Chamber restaurants. There will be no formal agendas, however, the conversation should be largely centered on what is happening in Neligh or what “business cool” innovations the Chamber or its partners could develop. This Committee is one step up from “let’s meet for lunch and talk,” the only difference is that it is organized each month. This committee will augment the Chamber’s “business cool” brand by serving to:

- ◆ Act as a monthly social gathering to keep Board Meetings on track.
- ◆ Become a place that will foster idea generation.
- ◆ Support Chamber Restaurants with 5-20 patrons once a month.
- ◆ Ensure the Chamber and Neligh do not become complacent.

**NICHE:** Youth engagement and education is paramount to the success of the Chamber and the growth of Neligh. The NICHE Program currently in development by the Neligh Economic Development Office will foster relationships between N-OHS students and Chamber businesses, re-investing in Neligh's youth. The Neligh Intern and Craftsman High School Employment Program (NICHE) –“*Find your niche!*” – will entice Neligh businesses by way of a grant that will allow them to hire high school students to act as interns and junior journeymen. Businesses will gain access to potential employees and the students will have their eyes opened to the opportunities that exist in Neligh. The Chamber, ED Office, and school will partner to develop and implement this program. The Chamber's support and involvement with this program will help to foster its “business cool” attitude.

## Achieve

**Attain the “Business Cool” Brand:** Re-branding the Chamber is necessary to “Achieve Greatness Together.” The Chamber's transition from a Chamber of Events to a Chamber of Commerce was a bumpy road. The change was necessary but many relationships were strained. In order to repair and solidify these relationships, the Chamber must work to create “must attend events” that showcase the Chamber as an integral part of business viability in Neligh. To attain “business cool” the Chamber Board must lead by example and completely buy-in to the concept. They must reaffirm that the Chamber is “business cool” and correct those that are not using the “business cool” attitude.

**Togetherness:** The Chamber cannot “achieve greatness” without cooperation. The Chamber must foster this sense of “togetherness.” Networking opportunities is the most viable way to achieve “togetherness.” Networking is invaluable to small business owners because every person you meet are potential clientele. Chamber networking events must be seen as cannot miss events which will help enhance the “business cool” brand.



- ◆ **Chamber Coffees** – Chamber Coffees will be hosted by participating Chamber businesses on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays of the month. Candice Hoke at the State Farm Office will organize the Chamber Coffee schedule. As mentioned above, hosts will be spotlighted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> weeks with a small write up about their business.

- ◆ **Business Afterhours** – will be held at least once a quarter. The Annual Meeting and Business Afterhours Committee will be primarily responsible for the organization and execution of this program.

**Accountability:** It is difficult if not impossible to measure success without clearly defining roles of those who will help you “achieve greatness.” For this reason it is crucial to clearly define the responsibilities of officers, committees, and committee chairs.

- ◆ **President** – Shall be the recognized head of the organization. Responsible for partnering with the secretary to create agendas of meetings. Responsible for conducting meetings. Field member concerns. In charge of fostering the “business cool” attitude within the Chamber Board. Encourage adherence to the Strategic Plan.

## WHAT IS BUSINESS COOL?

“Business cool” is an attitude. It is the idea that the Chamber is a great organization to be part of. In terms of major brand examples, it is the difference between Walmart and Target. Some will always shop at Walmart but most would rather spend more money at Target simply because of its clean and friendly brand. For the Chamber to become “business cool” it must show that it is friendly, fun, and viable at every event and meeting.

During regular meetings will ask for an update from each committee. Other duties detailed in the organizational by-laws.

- ◆ *Vice-President* – shall act in the stead of the President if unable to perform said duties.

- ◆ *Treasurer* – Shall create annual budget in April. Shall be the recognized financial authority of the organization. Other duties detailed in the organizational by-laws.

- ◆ *Secretary* – Record keeper and communications distributor of the organization. Shall work closely with the President to formulate agendas and prepare minutes. Other duties detailed in the organizational by-laws.



- ◆ *Holiday Committee:* Shall work closely with the community to offer the Chamber’s services to showcase the quality of life of Neligh through “business cool” holiday events, including but not limited to, Christmas, Halloween, Easter, and Teacher Appreciation. The Holiday Committee Chair will be responsible for recruiting and communicating with committee members. Committee members do not need to be exclusively Chamber members to participate. The Chair will work to organize and delegate tasks to committee members. Promotion and advertising of “business cool” events will be a main task of the Chair. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Board.

- ◆ *BBQ Committee:* The BBQ Committee is responsible for organizing and executing the annual BBQ during the Antelope County Fair. The Committee Chair is responsible for recruiting committee members, delegating tasks to said members, and overseeing the total progress of preparation. Promotion of the event will be a primary task of the Chair. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Board.

- ◆ *Strategic Planning and Education Committee:* Shall develop, encourage adherence, and update annually the Strategic Plan of the Neligh Chamber of Commerce. This document will shape the direction of the Chamber and all updates shall need the approval of the Chamber Board. This committee is responsible for youth incorporation, primarily the FBLA. The Committee shall also organize educational workshops that will foster the “business cool” brand of the Chamber while covering relevant topics. The Committee Chair shall recruit committee members, delegate tasks to said members, and oversee progress of the committee. Promotion of events will be a primary task of the Chair. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Board.

- ◆ *Annual Meeting and Business After Hours Committee:* Shall organize, promote, and invite members to the Chamber’s annual meeting. This committee will also be responsible for organizing and promoting a “business cool” quarterly Chamber Business After Hours event. The Committee Chair is responsible for recruiting committee



members, delegating tasks to said members, and overseeing the total progress of preparation. Promotion of the event will be a primary task of the Chair. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Board.

- ◆ *Retail Trade Committee:* Shall be responsible for coordinating “business cool” retail promotions for the whole of Neligh and business clusters of Chamber members. Some areas that may be of interest are the Bargain Buy-Way, City Wide Garage Sales, and creation of new retail events such as Shabby Chic Days or Flag Day. The Committee Chair is responsible for recruiting committee members, delegating tasks to said members, and overseeing the total progress of preparation. Promotion of the event will be a primary task of the Chair. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Board.
- ◆ *Membership and Recruitment Committee:* Shall coordinate the membership drive, send membership brochures, welcome new businesses, and coordinate “business cool” ribbon cuttings. The Committee Chair is responsible for recruiting committee members, delegating tasks to said members, and overseeing the total progress of preparation. Promotion of the event will be a primary task of the Chair. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Board.

**Staff:** Since the above tasks will consume a fair amount of time, the Chamber should strive to hire part-time staff to help coordinate and shoulder some of the burden placed on Board Members. Currently, the Chamber donates \$5,000 to the Economic Development Office. Next year marks the last donation of funds to the Economic Development Office. The Chamber Board will look to hire someone with these funds already allocated. Prior to hiring said part-time position, the Chamber Strategic Planning Committee will develop a job description and hiring process for the Chamber employee. The Board will amend and approve the job description and hiring process. After which, the Chamber will advertise and fill the position. The staff will be located in the Chamber Office and will administer the Big Bucks Program, prepare financial statements for the Treasurer to oversee, and act as de-facto secretary during the meetings. This will free up

Board Members from tedious tasks which will allow them to focus on Committee duties.

***Yearly Assessment:***

Every April, the Chamber Board will conduct a yearly assessment of the organization. This assessment will entail preparation of a budget, auditing and amending the Strategic Plan, assessing if the organization has maintained its “business cool” brand, and evaluate if outlined goals have been met or are attainable.



## Prioritization and Delegation Schedule

Below you will find the Prioritization and Delegation Schedule for the above mentioned Strategies and Action Objectives. Refer to the Strategies and Action Objectives section for more information on the action items.

### Educate

Action Item	Committee	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Quarterly Trainings	Strategic Planning	Quarterly	Immediately
Transportation	Strategic Planning	As Needed	Immediately
Communication	Strategic Planning, Secretary, and Staff	As Needed	Immediately



### Support

Action Items	Committee	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Promote Business	All Board Members	Always through “business cool” attitude	Immediately
Chamber Spotlight	Candice Hoke and Retail Trade	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Weeks of the month	March 2014
Drive-In Marketing	Retail Trade	Drive-In Season	Begin Planning Immediately Implement End of Year 1
Home Show	Retail Trade	Annually	Plan - Year 1 Implement - Year 2
Quality of Life Showcase	Holiday Committee	Holiday Events	Continue as Before
Grant Program	Strategic Planning	Brainstorm and Plan as Needed	Plan - Year 1 Implement - Year 2
Big Bucks	Economic Development and Treasurer – Staff will take over when hired	As Needed	Continue as Before

## Invest

Action Items	Committee	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Partnerships	All Board Members especially President	Always through “business cool” attitude	Immediately
Grow Neligh Committee	Secretary/Staff	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month	May 2014
NICHE Program	Strategic Planning, Economic Development Office, and NOHS	Meet as needed Meet as needed Annually to award grants	Plan - Year 1 Pilot Program – Year 2 Full Implementation - Year 3

## Achieve

Action Items	Committee	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
“Business Cool” Brand	All Board Members	Always through “business cool” attitude	Immediately
Chamber Coffees	Candice Hoke and Business After Hours	1st and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fridays of the month	March 2014
Business After Hours	Annual Meeting and Business After Hours	At least Quarterly	Immediately
Accountability	All Board Members	Always	Immediately
Staff	Strategic Planning	Meet as needed Hire as needed	Plan – Year 1 Implement – Year 2
Yearly Assessment	Strategic Planning and Treasurer	Annually	Yearly in April

## Summary

The Neligh Chamber of Commerce has already made the switch away from a Chamber of Events. Adherence to this document will ensure that it will transition TO a Chamber of Commerce. This will not be an easy road especially for the first year in which the Committee Chairs will have to shoulder a decent sized burden. However, once the end goal of attaining staff is achieved, the burden will be tremendously lightened. This is not to say the staff will be a “knight in shining armour” here to whisk away all the Board’s problems. Treating staff as such will only further hamstring the Chamber. The ONLY way to “achieve greatness together” and grow Neligh is through an engaged Board. The most important take-a-way from this document should be the idea of “business cool.” The Chamber must work to establish this tenant, making the Chamber an integral piece to every business’s success.

