



IACCE Chamber Certification Program Application

Updated 2026

The IACCE Certified Chamber of Commerce Program recognizes chambers that meet rigorous, peer-reviewed standards across key operational areas — including governance, finance, membership, government affairs, communications, and technology. As Illinois' professional development organization for chamber professionals, IACCE is committed to guiding chamber leaders and supporting one another, and certification is one way we fulfill that commitment. It signals a chamber's dedication to sound business practices, strong leadership, and meaningful community impact — driving economic growth and a pro-business environment across Illinois.

Implementation

IACCE's certification recognizes chambers for sound business practices and innovative programming that serves their members. As Illinois' professional development organization for chamber professionals, IACCE is committed to guiding chamber leaders and supporting one another.

Certification Process

Applications are reviewed and scored by a certification committee of experienced chamber professionals representing small, medium, and large chambers. Scores are presented to the full IACCE Board, which marks each applicant as "Approved" or "Suggest Improvement" and provides feedback accordingly. Because standards are high, not all chambers will meet the criteria.

All questions must be answered. If a chamber does not offer a particular program or document, an explanation or policy statement must be provided in its place. Incomplete

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applications — those with undocumented items or unexplained N/A responses — will not be scored.

Point System

Certification is based on a 0–3 point scale. Each item includes a defined standard for meeting expectations (2). Unless otherwise noted, the following scale applies:

0 – Does Not Participate: The chamber lacks the program or documentation requested. An explanation from the governing body is required; blank items render the application invalid.

1 – Needs Improvement: The chamber has a program or documentation but does not meet the minimum standard. Reviewers should include comments, and IACCE will offer support or training as needed.

2 – Meets Expectations: The chamber demonstrates sound business practices that meet IACCE's standards for a well-run chamber. This is the baseline for certification.

3 – Exceeds Expectations: The chamber's program or documentation is innovative and well beyond standard expectations. Specific criteria for earning a 3 are noted where applicable; otherwise, scorers use their discretion. Chambers earning 3s are candidates IACCE may invite to share their programs as industry best practices.

Think of 3 as extra credit — reserved for programs that are truly unique and that IACCE would highlight for the broader chamber community.

Certification

For certification, the chamber must achieve a minimum of 50 points. There are 29 best practices areas which allows a chamber to have up to four areas that need improvement while still qualifying for accreditation. Although there are several areas that are mandatory, it will still be a process that your chamber can fulfill.

The certification is valid for three years. Certified chambers should reapply in the second year of certification to ensure no lapse in certification.

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Submission Timeline

The deadline to submit applications is **September 1st of each year**. (No applications are accepted after this date.) Panels of at least three chamber professionals review and score each application.

Newly certified chambers are recognized during the IACCE annual conference at the annual awards ceremony, including a presentation of a Certified Chamber of Commerce plaque. In addition, a marketing packet is provided to assist the chamber in utilizing certification designation as an effective marketing tool in recruitment efforts.

Application

The information on this page is for statistical classification only. The information must be completed in its entirety for certification; however, no points are awarded for information on this page.

Chamber Name:

Address:

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Website: _____

Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

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Payment

All fees must accompany the application. Application fees are non-refundable under any circumstance and payment of the fee does not guarantee certification. The application fee is **\$250**. (For chambers with US Chamber Accreditation, the application fee is **\$50**.)

☐ To pay by credit card: Please visit <https://iacce.org/chamber-certification-program/>

☐ To pay by check:

Make check payable to IACCE and mail to: IACCE PO Box 9436, Springfield IL, 62791-9436

Supporting Information

Paid Full-time Executive: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Number of Employees on Staff: ☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time Count: _____

Population of area served: _____

Geographic description of area served:

Total Annual Operating Budget: \$ _____

Number of Paying Members: _____ (attach copy of dues levels)

Mandatory Items Checklist

The following items are mandatory requirements to apply for certification. Please take a moment to ensure that these items are included.

- ☐ Articles of Incorporation
- ☐ Bylaws
- ☐ IRS Letter of Determination
- ☐ Form 990
- ☐ Three months of Meeting Agenda/Minutes

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- ☐ Annual Budget
- ☐ Financial oversight
- ☐ Financial review or audit
- ☐ Fees submitted
- ☐ IACCE member in good standing

Are each of the above items included? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you checked "No," you are finished scoring this application. The chamber should provide the additional documentation and reapply next year.

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Section I – Governance & Legal Documents

1. Articles of Incorporation: Mandatory requirement
2. Bylaws: Mandatory requirement
3. Copies of IRS documents: Mandatory requirement
 - a. Letter of determination
 - b. Most recent IRS Form 990
4. Board Leadership manual/handbook
5. Process and documentation for selection and installation of officers
6. Policies:
 - a. Conflict of interest
 - b. Whistleblower policy
 - c. Confidentiality policy
7. The three most recent board agendas and corresponding minutes with a description of the process for developing the agenda and board meeting frequency.

Section II – Strategic Direction

1. Mission statement and demonstrated use: Mandatory requirement.
2. Current strategic plan.
3. Current business, action plan, or program of work, including a description of how the "state of the chamber" is reported to members.

Section III – Financial & Risk Management

1. Insurance Coverage
 - a. Mandatory:
 1. Directors & Officers
 2. General Liability
 - b. Recommended:
 1. Host Liquor Liability
 2. Volunteer
 3. Meetings
2. Current budget and prior year budget-to-actuals comparison.
3. Most recent profit and loss statement and balance sheet, along with a description of how financials are reported to the board.

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4. Financial review (or audit) of the current ytd and previous year.
5. Financial policies and procedures manual.
6. Emergency preparedness plan or documented board-approved approach.
7. Crisis communications plan or documented board-approved approach.

Section IV – Administration & Staffing

1. Employee manual and personnel policies.
2. Current staff members and job descriptions.
3. Executive Director/CEO Employment Contract.
4. Staff performance evaluations template.
5. Executive Director/CEO performance evaluation template.

Section V – Membership Services

1. Market Knowledge and Collaboration
 - a. Description of service area: *Mandatory Item.*
 - b. Provide information on your market share: *Zero or two points only.*
2. Membership Application
 - a. Current application.
 - b. Dues investment levels with current number of members at each level.
3. Retention Plan
 - a. Copy of retention plan.
 - b. Impact of your retention plan.
4. Programs/Events/Services
 - a. Describe up to six programs or services, including what it is, why the chamber offers it, and how success is measured — including results from the past 24 months.
5. Member Communications
 - a. Communications plan and examples (such as mail, newsletter, email, and social media).
 - b. Provide available metrics demonstrating the reach and effectiveness of your communications efforts (examples: open rates, social media engagement, email bounce rates, ROI on mailings).
6. Marketing/Branding Strategy
 - a. Describe your chamber's marketing and branding strategy and provide up to six examples that illustrate how it is applied across channels or campaigns.

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7. Media Relations
 - a. Provide up to six examples of media coverage from the past 24 months, including news releases and resulting coverage. Examples may include links, clippings, or printouts.
8. Economic Development
 - a. Chamber's role in economic development and recent successes (maximum of three examples within the last two years).
9. Technology
 - a. Describe the technology you currently use and any plans for enhancement (examples: CRM, AI platforms, text message marketing, database, apps, website enhancements such as video and blogging).
10. Advocacy/Government Affairs
 - a. Chamber's policy and procedures for advocacy/government affairs. Provide your advocacy platform and describe your most recent and successful campaigns (maximum of three within the past 24 months).

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