

Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce



Overview

Founded in 1882, the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce is the largest business organization in Western Washington with nearly 2,500 Seattle-area businesses as members. The Chamber strives to be a catalyst, advocate, convener and partner in the Puget Sound Region. Its mission is to be the champion of the region's future as a world leader in economic vitality and quality of life by providing collaborative leadership, business advocacy and member-driven services.

Regional Priorities

The Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce is focused on several regional priorities. One of the most important of these is job creation. The recent downturn in the U.S. economy hit the Pacific Northwest particularly hard, leaving many residents without a job. The unemployment rate in the state of Washington is one of the highest in the country and it has been projected that Seattle will have an unemployment rate of 7.5% by the end of 2004.

In an effort to strengthen and protect the regional economy from cyclical downturns in the economy, the Chamber has been focused on creating and attracting knowledge-based jobs. In the past, the Seattle area was largely dependent on Boeing to sustain the economy, but Boeing recently moved its headquarters from Seattle to Chicago. Steve Leahy, President and CEO of the Chamber stated that "there is probably no other economy in the world that is as affected by one single company (Boeing). The city recognized 30 years ago that the economy needed to become diversified, and this is still a priority."

In the last few years, the Chamber has also been focused on improving the physical infrastructure in the region and on promoting regional collaboration. This has become more important lately since in the last decade, the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue region grew by about one million people. "This has put enormous pressure on the existing infrastructure" said Leahy. As a result, the Chamber is looking for ways to support new infrastructure investments in the region. Moreover, the Chamber recognizes the importance of regional collaboration among business and civic institutions, especially across political jurisdictions. The Chamber contributes \$7,500 a year to The Regional Partnership, a broad-based public education and citizen involvement effort to encourage the region's legislators to take steps to improve the regional economy.

In addition to creating jobs, improving the regional infrastructure and promoting regional collaboration, the Chamber's 2004 Legislative Agenda includes other priorities such as K-12 education and higher education, housing and land use, energy and healthcare policies.