



Accreditation FAQ

Q: How have the standards for accreditation been set?

A: The Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada (CACC), a dedicated team of representatives from all levels of the chamber network, oversees the accreditation process. The CACC determined what the core activities of a chamber are and what the requirements under each activity would be for accreditation. Through a process of refining over more than three years, the current checklist of requirements has been laid out.

Q: Is it possible that requirements for accreditation will change?

A: Yes, it is possible that requirements will change. The process has to be flexible enough to allow for changes in the business environment. The CACC will periodically review the requirements to ensure that they remain relevant and realistic. Any changes would be communicated to chambers and be posted on the chamber network's website, www.chamber.ca.

Q: So we're accredited - now what?

A: You should display and promote your seal of accreditation to your community-at-large-this will include your members, your potential members and the general public. You've earned the right to brag-now do it!

Your members (or potential members) are now assured that you have business processes and practices in place that have met with national accreditation standards in the key areas of operations/administration, member programs and services and policy/advocacy work. In addition to these areas, those chambers who are accredited with distinction will also have processes in place for governance and strategic planning.

Q: What tools are available to me as an accredited chamber of commerce?

A: The accreditation section of the chamber network's website provides a number of tools that will assist you in making your new status known. These tools include: a press release, a letter to your members, a listing in the accreditation section of the chamber network's website, and, most importantly, the use of the appropriate seal of accreditation.

Q: Why should I go through this process?

A: Chambers have told us that there is increased competition in the membership marketplace. Potential members are asking more questions before they commit to any membership dollars. Accreditation is a declaration to those potential members that your organization is well-run and business-like in its operations. It states what your core activities are and what sets you apart from the competition.

Q: Why are there mandatory accreditation pillars?

A: Through meetings and discussions and the pilot process itself, it was determined that if you are actively engaged in these three core activities, you may not be a chamber of commerce. Policy/Advocacy was the first area to be determined as unique to chambers of commerce. No other business organization is doing the policy and advocacy work on behalf of business that chambers and boards of trade are doing across the country. No other business organization is lobbying on business' behalf through a three-tier system, through a formalized policy-setting process. Membership Programs/Services - if you're not involved in servicing your members, through business-after-five events, business forums and more, then what are you doing? Organization/Administration is the pillar which shows that your chamber has the processes in place that mirror common business practices-if you can't prove you run a sound business, why would businesses join your chamber?

Q: What does it cost to become accredited?

A: The cost of accreditation is based upon the same criteria used to determine your level of accreditation-small, medium and large.

Of course, much of the cost will come in terms of your commitment to the process. No doubt, the accreditation process will require a certain number of human resources to put your application together. The accreditation process is not easy. But everything worth having is worth working for-right?

Q: What does it mean if your chamber doesn't become accredited immediately?

A: The CACC understands that this is not something that all chambers will be able to achieve immediately. But we have to start somewhere. We have not set the bar unreasonably high. Those chambers who are well-run and focused will probably achieve accreditation more rapidly. But it gives all chambers a goal to strive for.

Initially, the accreditation status is all to your benefit and that of your members-present or potential. But through this process, the whole network will gain as more chambers become accredited and recognized as the unique network that we are from coast to coast to coast.

Q: How do I "sell" the idea of accreditation to my board of directors?

A: We've developed a PowerPoint presentation to help you do just that! We realize that this process will take you and/or some of your staff away from day-to-day activities. We'll help you prove that the time way from "the other stuff" is worthwhile. Additional help is available from the provincial, territorial, regional, and national chambers of commerce.

Q: How can I use the accreditation seal?

A: We encourage you to plaster it everywhere! If there's room on your stationery, put it there! On your Web site? Absolutely! It'll look good there too. And why not add it to your membership certificates, bulletin boards, displays, brochures and newsletters. There are probably lots of places where you can put it. You've earned the right-shine your light!