Horizon 2035 Discussion Guide

Catalytic Leadership
How does a chamber provide catalytic leadership? When it defines its vision in terms of what it will BE rather than what it will DO. Chambers then view themselves as instigators of change, not merely as a resource to help manage it. Catalytic leaders take proactive steps to shape the future instead of simply responding to the actions of others.

- Where does our chamber currently demonstrate the strongest leadership in our community?
- Where are the opportunities to lead transformational change for our community?
- How can we position our chamber as a proactive instigator of change rather than a reactive entity?
- How can cross-sector partnerships enhance our catalytic efforts?

Belonging and Gathering
The nature of belonging and gathering has transformed dramatically in recent years. Today communities exist both physically and virtually. Yet, many feel isolated and alone, especially as many of our community institutions no longer serve as gathering places. We can capitalize on the collective eagerness for reconnection, while also providing a blueprint for leveraging cross-sector partnerships to tackle big challenges.

- How can we best leverage our convening power to accomplish our priorities and address the community's greatest challenges?
- What new approaches could help us foster greater belonging among diverse businesses and business groups?
- What strategies can we adopt to foster a sense of belonging among a wider group of community stakeholders to ensure we are viewed as a cause rather than a club?

Political and Social Fragmentation
Polarization–creating "us-versus-them" division–is as old as time. While some people thrive on it, one of a chamber's enduring roles is to find common ground. Chamber leaders must adapt by strengthening their facilitation skills, fostering inclusive dialogue and promoting collaborative solutions to benefit the broader community.

- What role should our chamber play in bridging political and social divides?
- How can we advocate for policies that unify and benefit the broader business community?
- How can our chamber stake out the moderate middle on issues of importance to members amidst an increasingly polarized world?

Changing Business Models
While membership dues remain important, successful chambers have mastered the art of balanced innovation - finding new revenue streams without compromising their core mission. Chambers are reassessing their value propositions to align and engage stakeholders around meaningful priorities.

- Does our current membership model reflect the evolving needs of local businesses?
- How do we tell the story of the impact we make in the community more effectively to attract investment from those who want to make a difference?
- What avenues of non-dues revenue are most relevant for our chamber's market?

Changing Expectations of Chambers
Chambers of commerce have proven their effectiveness as community changemakers. As a result, community members are now bringing new, oftentimes complex community issues to chambers, viewing them as trusted problem solvers. This shift requires chamber leaders to adapt and develop new leadership skills and approaches to meet elevated expectations.

- How can we align our program of work with the growing expectations of our members and community?
- How can we ensure our work is aligned with community needs in a way that also allows for bandwidth when new opportunities arise?
- What new leadership skills and approaches do we need to meet these expectations?

Inclusive Economic Growth
As the population becomes increasingly diverse, creating an environment for economic opportunity for all will be essential for the future of our communities. Demographic shifts and labor force changes are causing chambers to think differently about the future of the businesses they serve and the workforce those companies will need.

- What steps can we take to ensure broad-based economic opportunities for everyone in our community?
- How can we develop strategies that anticipate shifting demographics and greater diversity to create broad-based prosperity and ensure our organization remains relevant and resilient in the years to come?
- What are we doing to address barriers to opportunity and upward mobility, including access to housing, childcare, transportation and skills training?
- How can we support businesses in creating inclusive workplace practices and corporate cultures?

Digital Transformation and Technological Innovation
The strategic adoption of new technologies and a commitment to innovation are essential for chambers to enhance their operations, improve member communication and broaden their range of services. Forward-thinking chambers can embrace artificial intelligence, data analytics and automation to increase efficiencies and innovate their programs.

- How can we meet the evolving needs of our members and maintain relevance and credibility in a digitally transforming world?
- What steps can we take to personalize our stakeholder communications to keep their attention in a world of distraction and information overload?
- What digital strategies should we consider in order to create and maintain connections and trust with younger generations?
- What opportunities do we see for artificial intelligence to help advance our work?
- How do we leverage our platform as a trusted source to break through the noise and communicate the facts that matter?

Chambers as Unifiers
Chamber leaders have developed the skills needed to foster dialogue across divides and build consensus. Going beyond simply serving as conveners, they have become trusted sources of leadership on challenging issues. They lead efforts to bridge political fragmentation, promote policies that benefit the broader community and reinforce trust in business leadership.

- Where do we need to unify, and where do they need to catalyze?
- What relationships do we need to build or strengthen to make the greatest impact in our community?
- What actions can we take to promote civic engagement and civility?

Leadership Churn
Leadership churn, including the retirement and replacement of chamber CEOs, key staff volunteer business executives, and other community pillars poses significant challenges to chamber stability. The loss of seasoned leaders results in a gap in institutional knowledge and sometimes the loss of long-running chamber champions, necessitating the development of new leaders.

- How do chamber leaders strive for continuity on their boards as leadership shifts grow nationally?
- How can we cultivate the next generation of internal chamber leadership and strengthen succession planning?
- What strategies should we implement to ensure continuity and stability during leadership transitions?
- How can chambers identify and engage elected officials to shepherd growth and sustainability policies through the council or the legislature?

Talent Development at the Speed of Business
Evolving employer and employee expectations, demographic and population shifts, technological advancements and other factors drive the need for rapid talent development, including adaptive training and industry-aligned skills. Chambers can help create new solutions to meet business demands

- How can we address the changing employee landscape and take action to enhance workforce readiness and ensure a resilient and capable labor force in a dynamic job market?
- How can we help create new solutions to meet business demands?
- What education and workforce partnerships do we need to establish or strengthen in order to adapt workforce and skills training programs to meet the rapidly changing needs of our businesses?

Global Impacts
Chambers can also serve as a conduit to support local businesses expanding their reach into new markets, encouraging international organizations to invest in their local economy and advocating for practical solutions to attract and retain international talent.

- Does our community embrace its role in the global economy?
- How can we support local businesses in accessing global markets and talent?