

Billings Chamber of Commerce 2015 Chamber of the Year

it's
BiLLiNGS

Chamber of Commerce

2015
Annual Report



Billings Chamber
of Commerce

815 S. 27th St.
Billings, MT 59101
406-245-4111



Advocate. Connect. Grow.

The Billings Chamber represents our 1,169 business members who employ 46,355 people. We help these businesses **grow** their bottom line by **connecting** them to opportunities and **advocating** for their business and our community.

Our Mission: To develop a strong business climate and vibrant economy by serving the community in a leadership role thereby enhancing the quality of life.

Our Vision: To achieve excellence in community leadership and growth.

Our Team Promise to our members and the community is to always look at new and better ways to serve you, to do business and to make Billings a better place to live and work. Our brand speaks loudly of change, energy and excitement. As a team we will consistently deliver the wow factor, innovative ideas, knowledge, integrity, leadership and laughter. We're proud of what we do and where we live. Let's SHOUT it out!

Our Core Competencies:

- ▶ Support business needs including leading local, state and federal legislative issues impacting business and our quality of life;
- ▶ Promote Billings as a preferred destination for visitors, business travelers and sporting events;
- ▶ Provide opportunities for our membership relating to education, networking and value added services.

Your Chamber



The Billings Chamber received the highest award that a chamber can receive from the United States Chamber of Commerce: 5-Star Accreditation. Less than 1% of the 3,000 chambers in the U.S. have this designation. The Chamber has also been recognized with the Chamber of the Year award from the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. This prestigious honor is the only award recognizing the dual role chambers



have in leading businesses and communities and recognizes Billings as the best Chamber of our size. We are a non-profit 501(c)6 and are here to serve you. Your board consists of community leaders representing small and large businesses and diverse business interests. The Chamber has strategic management agreements to further the regional travel industry with both Visit Billings and Southeast Montana Tourism (SEMT).

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Our Organization



Chamber of Commerce



The Billings Chamber is a 501c6 business organization led 21 board members overseeing roughly \$4.7 million in revenues. Revenues are derived from membership dues, event sponsors and attendees, other private investment and from management contracts with the following organizations:

Visit Billings, funded by a combination of lodging tax funds and Tourism Business Improvement District assessments, is an independent 501c6 governed by a seven-person board of directors with a separate budget approved by the City Council. Their \$2.2 million budget is generated through a \$2/night assessment on hotel overnights and the State Lodging Tax and is used to market Billings as a tourist destination.

Visit Southeast Montana Tourism consists of thirteen counties and two Indian reservations in Southeast Montana. It is a 501c6 governed by a 21-person board of directors and funded by a portion of the 7% State Lodging Tax. This returns approximately \$716,000 annually to the region for marketing and recruitment of new and repeat visitors. Montana's Tourism Advisory Council approved the budget.

More on Visit Billings

The mission of Visit Billings is to generate room nights for lodging facilities in the city of Billings by effectively marketing the region as a preferred travel destination. Working with partners through the state and region, Billings is successfully positioned as Montana's Trailhead.



More on Visit Southeast Montana



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At Visit Southeast Montana the goal is to help visitors discover all of the amazing things to see and do in Southeast Montana, whether it be the natural scenery at Bighorn Canyon or a homemade milkshake from a small town diner. They are working hard to raise the profile of eastern Montana as a travel destination and make it a part of the overall Montana tourism story.

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Welcome from President and CEO, John Brewer



Your Chamber staff, board of directors and you, our members: simply the best in the country!

Receiving the Chamber of the Year award from the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives in August was an honor that every chamber in the nation aspires to.

As a member of this organization you volunteer on committees, financially support the Chamber and its initiatives, evangelize all the great work we are doing—and the work that still needs to be done—and offer direction to move Billings toward a brighter tomorrow. The Chamber of the Year Award was earned by the Billings Chamber in large part because of you.

It was a great 2014-2015, however, we are fully aware that this honor was only a stepping stone to what will come next; and big things are in store. A significant part of the Chamber of the Year application was the narrative and results from our “Defining Tomorrow” initiative.

“Defining Tomorrow” was a process that enlisted scores of business and civic leaders, partner organizations, and the community at-large and generated over 1,000 comments and pathways to community success.

Attaining this vision requires unwavering alliances with local and regional partners who own a stake in Billings’ success; just as we rely on our entire region’s prosperity for our success. Building a community for the Next Generation also necessitates that Millennials are part of the decision-making fabric.

Organizationally the Chamber aligned its resources to meet current demands while understanding that demands of tomorrow may look different from today.

The Billings Chamber does not exist to sell memberships, services and seats. We exist to move Billings forward and help your business grow.

Cheers to this past year, and look out tomorrow!



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Granite Peak Level – CenturyLink, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Station Stores, MSU Billings, U.S. Bank

Beartooth Level – Big Sky Economic Development, Rocky Mountain College, Albertsons District Office, Bay LTD, BNSF, Century 21 Hometown Brokers – Mark Dawson, Charter Business, Computers Unlimited, Crowley Fleck PLLP, Denny Menholt Chevrolet, ExxonMobil Refining & Supply Co., Gainan's, Integra, Montana-Dakota Utilities Co., Olsen Ortho Studio, PayneWest Insurance, Phillips 66, Stockman Bank – Billings, Underriner Honda, Vertex Consulting Group, Walmart – Heights, Western Security Bank – downtown

Member Opportunities and Benefits

As a member of the Billings Chamber, you gain a network of business partners who work together to help promote Billings' growing economy.

At the Billings Chamber a number of networking and educational events occur regularly that connect you to opportunities. Once you develop relationships with fellow Chamber members, they will feel comfortable doing business with you and refer you to others.

The other aspect of your membership is supporting an organization that works for the greater good of the Billings community. Membership dues allow staff to spend thousands of hours annually working on issues that directly affect the business climate and overall health and wealth of the Billings community.

Some of the Chamber membership benefits and events include Connect for Lunch, Connections groups (leads), Collaborate, Business

After Hours, Annual Meeting, Ag Appreciation Banquet, Ag Tour, Billings Chamber Breakfast, Trailhead Classic Golf Tournament, Leadership Billings, Member Orientations, Committees and Task Forces.

Interested in getting involved with your Chamber? Consider a committee or task forces. We want to hear your voice as we work for you, our members. Your involvement represents businesses in Billings and is a valuable investment to us and to the community.

Don't have time to get involved?

That's ok – we have you covered!
Your membership with the Chamber guarantees that you receive:

- ▶ A business listing and website link on BillingsChamber.com
- ▶ Chamber and Visitor Information Center referrals
- ▶ Recognition in Chamber publications
- ▶ Association with a reputable organization making positive impacts on the Billings community.

The Chamber's Membership Team is committed to helping you make the most of your membership. If at any time you would like to learn more about membership, please call us at 406-245-4111 or log on to BillingsChamber.com.

Meet the 2015-2016 Board of Directors

Executive Committee:



Jeff Walters
*Vertex Consulting
Group
Chair*



Bill Cole
*Cole Law Firm
Chair Elect*



Patrice Elliott
*EBMS
Secretary/
Treasurer*



Ron Yates
*Eide Bailly, LLP
Past Chair*



Kris Carpenter
*Sanctuary/Joy of
Living/Joy of Kids
Liaison, Member
Development*



Julie Dial
*Western Heritage
Center
Liaison Business
Advocacy/Gov't
Affairs*



Casey McGowan
*Trailhead Spirits
Liaison, Visit Billings*

Directors:



(left to right) Brian Brown *First Interstate Bank*, Chris Dimock *Elation, Inc.*, Dr. Randy Gibb *Billings Clinic*, Ginny Hart *Residence Inn by Marriott*, Allyn Hulteng *Billings Gazette*, Greg Kohn *Vistage Billings*, Nichole Mehling-Miles *St. Vincent Healthcare*



Ex-Officio Members:



(left to right) Mark Mueller *SM Energy Co.*, Dr. Mark Nook *MSU Billings*, Lisa Perry *NorthWestern Energy*

(left to right) Steve Arveschoug *Big Sky Economic Development*, Bill Kennedy *Yellowstone County Commissioner*, Terry Bouck *School District 2*, Tina Volek *City of Billings*

Thank you to our outgoing Board Chair and members:

The Billings Chamber Board and staff would like to thank Immediate Past Chairperson Ron Yates for his leadership, guidance and commitment to our organization for fiscal year 2014-2015. We look forward to continue to work with Ron as his tenure on the board continues.

Also, we are grateful to our outgoing board members for their years of service. Their commitment and time was crucial to the organization's growth:

Butch Bratsky: Stockman Bank
Jeff Junkert: Jeff Junkert Construction
Karen Fagg: HB Property MT

A message from this year's board chair: Jeff Walters



Welcome to a bright, new year with your Chamber and our community. As we begin our journey this year, I would like to introduce myself along with the strategic direction your Chamber will take this year and in to the future.

A little about me: I have the honor of serving as the 2015-2016 Board Chair. Over the past 30 years, I've held a variety of executive leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. I am currently the Chief Operating Officer of Vertex Consulting Group and its sister company Vertex Controls. As a huge supporter of our local business community, it is my privilege to now lead the Chamber's Board of Directors. In the coming year, we'll be pursuing a number of exciting strategic initiatives, as prioritized by our membership.

In 2020 Billings will be a dynamic center of regional commerce that draws families, workers, visitors and economic opportunities for our business community like never before. The chief architect of the chamber's work is you – we simply can't do what we do without your commitment to and investment in this organization.

Among the many benefits of your membership, we provide you with venues to network, connections to business opportunities, marketing and advertising formats you cannot access through any other means, and a professional staff passionate about helping you grow.

We appreciate your support as we look toward continued growth and success.

FMTFW^{PC}
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& WELDON, P.C.
Attorneys at Law

*Congratulations to the
Billings Area Chamber of Commerce
for its efforts and accomplishments
in promoting and building
our community.*

Laurence R. Martin
Kenneth S. Frazier
Jeffrey A. Weldon
Mary E. Duncan
Martin S. Smith
Ryan P. Browne
Randolph Jacobs, Jr. of Counsel

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The Billings Chamber Staff



(left to right) John Brewer CAE, President/CEO, Bruce MacIntyre Director, Business Advocacy & Government Affairs, Alex Tyson IOM, Executive Director, Visit Billings, Jennifer Reiser Chief Operating Officer



(left to right) Rene Beyl Business Engagement Specialist, Kelly McCandless Communications and Leisure Marketing Manager, Nick Mann Marketing/Public Relations, Visit Southeast Montana Tourism, Megan Stevenson Accountant, Kevin Cremer Business Development Manager

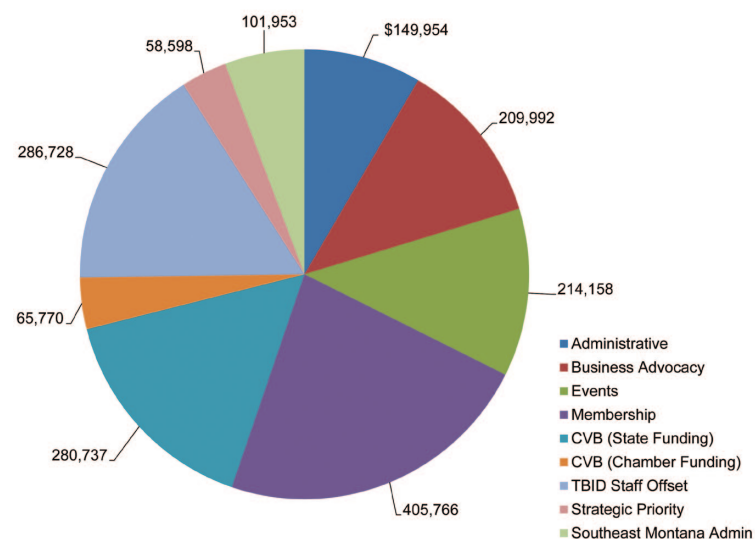
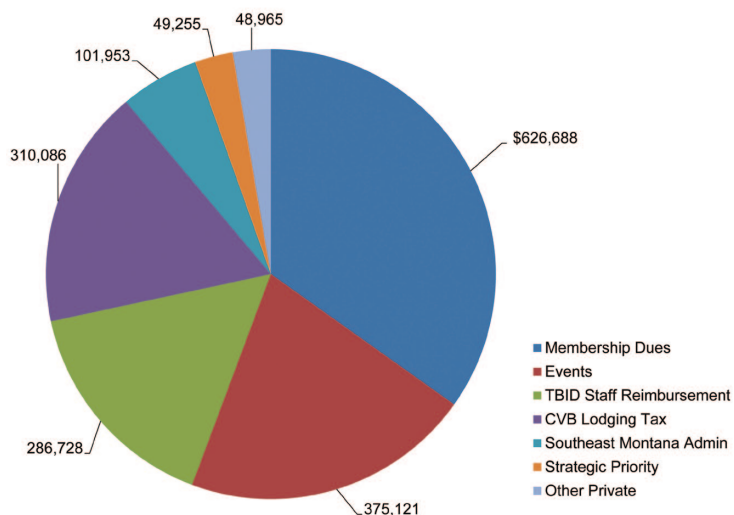


(left to right) Kate Hagenbuch Events Manager, Andy Austin Social Media and PR Manager, Visit Billings & Visit Southeast Montana, Alyssa Hall Visitor Services Specialist, Visit Billings, Daniel J. Brooks Member and Visitor Services Assistant, Billings Chamber and Visit Billings, Stefan Cattarin Visit Billings Sales Manager

2014-2015 Year End Financial Numbers

Total Revenue: \$1,798,796

Total Expenses: \$1,773,657



In addition, the Chamber manages \$740,600 for Southeast Montana Tourism and \$1,588,357 for the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District.

2014-2015 Report

Chamber of the Year

This was the culmination of a lot of wonderful teamwork over the past three years including the Chamber of the Future: Defining Tomorrow project, Trails initiative, as well as operational fine-tuning that resulted in a complete overhaul in certain areas.



Chamber of the Future

If 2013-14 was the year of discovery, 2014-15 was the year of implementation. Significant areas of progress this past year includes:

- Growth Plan 2019
 - Increased revenue realized due to changes to the dues structure; adjustments to the Southeast Montana and Billings Tourism Business Improvement District management agreements; events and programs.
 - New revenue realized due to the development of an optional contribution.
- Long Range Strategic Plan adopted (2015-2020).
- Reorganization eliminated the positions of Membership Relations Manager and Membership Recruitment Manager and created several new positions with specialized job descriptions: Member and Visitor Services Assistant, Business Engagement Specialist and Business Development Manager. In addition, the job duties and responsibilities for Director of Operations and Events Manager were reviewed and modified.
- A Governance review resulted in changes to the committee structure providing more value to member participants and aligning with the strategic plan.

Membership Division

- **Dues Structure:** After extensive internal and external review of our tiered structure, an overall increase in dues was implemented and an overhaul of membership benefits conducted. Benefits were aligned with the reasons members join and several new benefits were created. Two significant new benefits are the Jobs Board, designed to assist members in addressing their workforce needs, and the Future's Council, intended to provide access to and networking among top investor leadership.
- **Events:** Increased the production value and "Wow! Factor" for each event, and increased sponsorship opportunities.

- **Billings Chamber Breakfast:** Enter the Tank with Daymond John brought 1,773 attendees, making this our largest and most successful event to date.
- **NextGen Program:** In the first year we had 156 registered members and offered 22 events with a combined attendance of more than 500. We have an active Steering Committee of 20 and four NextGen Action Teams (subcommittees).
- **Leadership Billings:** Continued to offer two adult classes this year, high school youth class and offered several Leadership Alumni networking opportunities.

- **Ag Banquet:** Featuring the Doo-Wah Riders, the event attracted 886 attendees.
- **International Trip to Austria:** Our fifth international trip has 33 travelers.

Business Advocacy Division

- **2015 Legislative Session:**
 - Testified before committees on Chamber issues including Eastern Montana Crime Lab (passed), Increasing Career Technical Education Budget (passed), Serial Inebriate bill to deal with chronic alcoholism (failed), Eastern Montana Infrastructure/MSUBillings Library upgrade (failed), CSKT Water Pact (passed), and other business related bills.
 - Worked to get the Local Option Tax enabling legislation introduced.
 - Frequent trips to Helena to meet with

lobbyists, individual legislators, the Billings delegation and personnel with various state government departments.

- Capitol iNSiGHT e-news was distributed every other week during the session; Legislative Wrap-up luncheon event; Legislative Teleconferences with our legislative delegation every two weeks throughout the session.
- **Regional Legislative Agenda:** Facilitated a group effort to get signatures from every city, town, county, economic development groups and elected officials on a petition to the governor asking for \$90 million in

infrastructure repair and development for eastern Montana counties. The bonding bill for Eastern Montana failed by one vote in the legislature.

- **Billings Works:** Partnering with Big Sky Economic Development, City College, Job Service and many others to tackle specific workforce issues. Held a large group presentation on the four task areas. Billings Chamber leads the Talent Attraction component.
- **Candidate School:** Planned and implemented a school board and city council candidate school with 11 attendees.

Visit Billings Division

- **Group Bookings:** Achieved 234% of room night sales goals and 100% of number of group booking goals.
- **City Wide BIG-Deals Booked:** Wing Ding 38 announced for September 2016. The Hot Bike Tour booked their final stop in Billings and will bring thousands of bikers to town; contracts have been signed to solidify the annual Jehovah's Witness Watchtower through 2019 bringing thousands of attendees every June.
- **Sports Recruitment:** Border War, Big Sky Conference bid, GNAC Basketball Championships, NCAA DII Cross Country Region Championships, Stockman Bank Magic City Classic, Montana Marathon assistance, Big Sky VolleyFest, and several smaller but significant events like hockey, soccer, etc. continue to position Billings as a sports events hub.
- **VisitBillings:** rebranding put in to full effect

and success realized as clients, tourists and stakeholders better identify the organization and what it promotes.

- **VisitBillings.com:** Increased use of custom landing pages for both events and campaign related contests.
- **Social Media/Publicity:** The addition of a Social Media and PR Manager in October 2014 not only resulted in Facebook like's growing to over 7,000, but explosive growth in engagement with posts, the addition of Instagram to our offering, increased Pinterest engagement, and strategic content gathering initiatives. The team also works to promote events through media events and familiarization tours with tour operators and journalists.

- **Convention Services:** Serviced more than 50 groups for registration and marketing including thousands of registration bags and preparation for the BMW MOA 2015 International Rally.
- **Visitor Inquiries:** Since January 2015, mailed more than 15,000 visitor guides to prospective travelers seeing our marketing in publications including Better Homes and Garden and USA Today's Travel Guide.
- **Campaign Wins:** Took over Minneapolis' busiest terminal during the holidays, covering nearly every advertising space with Billings, Montana's Trailhead imagery. Recent winter and spring campaigns allowed potential visitors to choose their own prize package to win and to increase odds of winning through social engagement. Engagement on the website increased due to these package offerings.

Visit Southeast Montana

- **Public Relations/Social Media Manager:** Hiring of a new, Visit Billings-shared employee to take our social media presence and public relations activities to a new level.
- **Social Media:** Increased total Facebook page likes by 9,000 followers. Gained 959 followers for the SEMT Instagram account.
- **Advertising:** Changed our advertising strategy to commit to owning our region. Focused digital and print ads on potential weekend travelers in North Dakota (including the Bakken area), South Dakota, Wyoming, and Western Montana.
- **Lodging Tax Collections:** Increased Q1-Q3 lodging tax collections by 13% over the same period the previous year. (Q4 lodging tax numbers are not yet available)
- **Travel Guide:** Created most successful travel guide to date per feedback received from regional stakeholders. 100,000 copies were distributed throughout Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota.
- **Leadership:** SEMT continues to be a leader in the Montana tourism industry. The SEMT Marketing Plan was approved and held up as an example by the Tourism Advisory Council for how other tourism entities should design their own plans.
- **Partnerships:** Continuing close relationship with the Montana Office of Tourism. MTOT will partner with SEMT to produce a completely revamped design for www.southeast-montana.com. Partnered with the Sturgis Chamber of Commerce to have Travel Guides, online advertising, and promotional hand-outs available in the Black Hills area during the Rally. We also provided \$10,000 worth of grant funding for regional tourism promotion projects.

Additional Priority Areas:

- **Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site:** Roughly \$170,000 toward the \$500,000 fundraising goal has been reached. Developed professional brand, website, Facebook presence, brochures and merchandise items.
- **Trails:** Encouraged by continued negotiations with Western Sugar for a trail easement to connect Clarks Crossing to the Marathon Loop.
- Continue to work with City Parks to develop the Swords Rimrock Park trailhead as the model for trailheads in the park system.
- **Convention Center:** Feasibility study suggests we build a 150,000 square foot facility or lose 25% market share over the next five years. Continue to meet with the steering committee and research funding options.
- **Air Service:** Three-pronged approach initiated to increase service: a) facility enhancements; b) "fly Billings" advertising campaign; c) airline guarantee

Other priority successes:

Advocate for business and community; encourage development of community assets; support an innovative workforce; connect business with opportunity.

► Successes:


- The Chamber signed up 172 new members last year and reported an impressive 86.5% retention rate.
- Committees and task forces engaged 770 Chamber members addressing issues and events
- 11,350 Chamber members attended events for networking, education, motivation, and more.
- 8,297 members attended Chamber events.
- 4,780+ visitors were guided by staff and volunteers in the Visitor Information Center.



Billings Chamber of Commerce


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Congratulations on

Chamber of the year honors.





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Where ya headin'?

2015-2016 Chamber Priorities & Strategic Direction

With such a successful 2014-2015 year, the ground work was well placed for the Chamber to develop a progressive and impactful program for our 2015-2016 fiscal year as well as to establish a long-range plan reaching in to 2020. Read on to learn about where we're heading and how you can help.

Strategic Objectives 2020

- ▶ Advance Billings as the Dynamic Regional Center
- ▶ Grow and Recruit Trained Talent
- ▶ Lead Visitor Growth
- ▶ Influence Public Policy
- ▶ Enhance Value to Members
- ▶ Exceed Organizational Expectations

▶ Strategic objective I: Advance Billings as the Dynamic Regional Center

Billings is a desirable, regional destination to conduct business, for travel, relocation and business recruitment. We are Montana's Trailhead. By virtue of being the largest city in a vast region, our economy thrives. But being the largest isn't good enough: Billings must be the best by offering a dynamic urban setting and quality of life that is viewed as the best.

- Improve air service and the airport experience by increasing direct service and passengers.
Action 2015-16: Create a regional marketing campaign to increase passengers and encouraging BIL over other regional airports.
Action 2015-16: Secure federal funds and match to lure new destination service.
Action 2015-16: Create a stronger aesthetic welcome and touch-points that satisfy the traveler.
- Connect business to the issue of public safety to create greater safety awareness to reduce crime.
Action 2015-16: Launch task group to connect residents, government, business; evaluate safety levy.
- Expand the Heritage Trail System and improve historical assets and amenities to increase miles of trail and usage.
Action 2015-16: Progress

toward Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site development by reaching fundraising goal to restore this asset, developing a stronger sense of place and fulfilling chamber's 1928 commitment.

Action 2015-16: Progress toward Marathon Loop connection including: Yellowstone River Connection completion; and feasibility of Zoo and Zimmerman connections;

Action 2015-16: Completion of Swords Rimrock Park entryway.

- Improve meeting and convention space.
Action 2015-16: Explore funding and development.
- Realize a Trailhead Hospitality Corridor in east Billings.
Action 2015-16: Steering committee partnership.
- Lead a Community Appeals structure to prioritize community investment by 2017.
- ▶ **Strategic objective II: Grow and Recruit Trained Talent**
Billings' unemployment rate is 3.2% (July 2015). Employers are demanding a larger workforce and more certified and trained specialty workers with a culture for life-long learning. A comprehensive roadmap produced by BillingsWorks (a partnership between the Chamber, Montana State University Billings, City College, Rocky Mountain College, private business and led by Big Sky Economic Development) will be the driving structure to address workforce needs.
- Attract talent by promoting the benefits of living and working in Billings.
Action 2015-16: Develop key messages; online talent attraction site; business toolkit
- Retain higher-ed graduates through the Chamber's NextGen group.
Action 2015-16: Grow mentorship program to help students build a professional network, offer resources for career development and retain incoming young professional.

- Increase K-12 graduation rates through Graduation Matters from 85% to 91% by 2018.

Action 2015-16: Participate in United Way's steering committee.

▶ Strategic objective III: Lead Visitor Growth

Tourism is Montana's second largest industry and impacts nearly every business. Visitors to Billings are exposed to our community, opening the door to future economic opportunities including relocation and business development. They are our future residents and workforce. As the region's urban destination, Visit Billings will capitalize on our significant regional trade area as a target. Managing tourism promotion for Visit Southeast Montana (13 counties and two Indian Reservations) connects our region and creates marketing, sales and political synergies.

- Support and manage Visit Billings (including the Tourism Business Improvement District and Montana State Lodging Tax) with the following goals as outlined in a separate strategic plan:
 - Grow Billings as a Tourism Destination
 - Foster Airport Progression
 - Improve Visitor Experience
 - Increase Awareness in International Marketplace
 - Increase Leisure Visitation with Value Season Emphasis
 - Position Billings as Regional Leader for Sports Events
 - Increase Small Meeting and Citywide Convention Recruitment Efforts
- Support and manage Visit Southeast Montana Tourism with the following goals as outlined in a separate strategic plan:
 - Develop Marketing Partnerships
 - Grow In-Region Partnerships
 - Support Tourism Product Development
 - Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives

► Strategic objective IV: Influence Public Policy

The Billings Chamber serves as the voice for business at all levels of government: local, state and federal. The Chamber will advocate for issues impacting business and community and communicate to our members to create a better understanding of issues affecting the Billings region and eastern Montana. Advocacy efforts will be coordinated with a regional voice.

- Be the voice of Billings business on local issues: City of Billings, Yellowstone County, School District #2
Action 2015-16: Improve local government leadership by conducting candidate schools for all levels of local government each year;
Action 2015-16: Board to evaluate development of candidate endorsements and report cards;
Action 2015-16: Develop local issues agenda;
Action 2015-16: Evaluate the rationale and need for school levies for the May 2016 ballot.
- Be the voice of Billings business on statewide issues in Helena.
Action 2015-16: Develop a strategy with steering committee, and work with legislative interim committees, to introduce enabling local option legislation in 2017.
Action 2015-16: Develop a stronger voice for eastern Montana and urban areas throughout Montana on issues affecting our regional economy, especially finding a solution to the state's infrastructure shortcoming
Action 2015-16: Begin to identify policy issues for our 2016-'17 agenda.
- Be the voice of Billings business on federal issues impacting key industries and quality of place.
Action 2015-16: The Chamber's public policy web site will be the regional resource for all things policy.

► Strategic objective V: Enhance Value to Members

With over 1,170 members who employ over 44,000, the Chamber will provide platforms to cultivate leaders, grow customers for our members and help them establish business relationships.

- Lead programs to assist members in growing their customer base (B2B, tourism, general population)
Action 2015-16: Develop a year-round Shop Billings campaign while growing Small Business Saturday
Action 2015-16: Connect more members to new residents and visitors
Action 2015-16: Provide online tools for small, start up and struggling businesses in partnership with Big Sky Economic Development.
- Connect business through networking, events, marketing opportunities, virtual networking, and regional networking programs.
- Support Billings' major industries such as agriculture, healthcare, energy and tourism.
- Cultivate business and civic leaders (Leadership Billings, Trailhead Tourism Ambassadors, NextGen)
Action 2015-16: Identify city and coordinate our second Aspirational City Visit in May, 2016.

► Strategic objective VI: Exceed Organizational Expectations

Be the strongest Chamber in the country.

- Maintain high industry operational standards
Action 2015-16: Achieved "Chamber of the Year" designation through ACCE

Action 2015-16: Maintain 5-Star Accreditation through the U.S. Chamber.

Action 2015-16: Exceed annual benchmarking data for Chambers across the country in our category.

- Provide exceptional service to our members
Action 2015-16: Maintain Net Promoter Score above national average (customer service ranking)
- Grow revenue through the implementation of the 2019 Growth Plan to assure the long term financial strength of the Chamber to be able to carry out our community leadership mission.
- Continue to Define Tomorrow and maintain our reputation as the Chamber of the Future.
Action 2015-16: Evaluate ACCE's Horizons 2025 Influences and determine actionable items.
- Provide an environment of bold leadership and positive change, energy and excitement to better serve our community and business members.
Action 2015-16: Improve and streamline governance structure by completing the governance evaluation of bylaws, policies, and decision making processes
Action 2015-16: Create an environment that encourages a passionate, professional Chamber team;
Action 2015-16: Fulfill board member expectations for their service and cultivate potential new board members.

Connect with us!

Stay engaged with your Chamber year 'round. Our website is updated regularly and provides valuable information on our priority projects as well as networking tools, event information, membership directory, and much more. Visit BillingsChamber.com to explore all that our organization has to offer. You can also join us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/BillingsChamberofCommerceCVB](https://www.facebook.com/BillingsChamberofCommerceCVB) and Instagram at [@BillingsChamber](https://www.instagram.com/BillingsChamber).

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Karen Sanford Gall: Billings Chamber Legacy Award Recipient



The Billings Chamber of Commerce announced that Karen Sanford Gall, Executive Director for Montana Amateur Sports DBA Big Sky State Games, has been selected as the 2015 Legacy Award Winner. The award, formerly known as the Lifetime Achievement Award, is given by the Chamber Board of Directors and recognizes an outstanding individual who has dedicated his/her career to improving the business climate in our community while giving back to improve our quality of life.

"The Board of Directors is proud to present the 2015 Billings Chamber Legacy Award to Karen Sanford Gall," shared board chair Jeff Walters (Vertex Consulting Group). "Karen's tireless efforts over so many years have been a huge factor in enhancing the quality of life in Billings, and in Montana. It's a rare thing to be able to positively and directly impact the lives of thousands of people even one time, but Karen has done exactly that for many years. We're so proud that she's a part of the Billings community!"

Sanford Gall's career with Big Sky State Games began in 1990, and she's been the Executive Director since 1996. Her leadership extends beyond the State Games, however, as she also manages Montana Amateur Sports programs including the Heart and Sole

Run, Shape Up Montana, and Big Sky Fit Kids. Under her tenure, Sanford Gall has been a driving force in helping Billings become a healthier community, and her passion and commitment for helping others is reflected in the far reaching positive impact she has had across the State of Montana. She serves on the board of the Montana Women's Run and Midland Roundtable. She is co-chair of the Billings Chamber Trails Committee and a past Chair for the Billings Chamber. She currently serves on the Billings Public Schools - School Health Advisory Committee and Billings Action for Healthy Kids. Sanford Gall is also a 4-time Olympic Trials Qualifier in the Marathon. She earned her BS in Journalism at the University of Wyoming.

"Karen is very deserving of this award and has established a legacy of helping others improve their quality of life," expressed John Brewer, Chamber President and CEO. "This honor is a small way we can show our appreciation for her contributions to Billings."

Sanford Gall will receive the Legacy Award during the Billings Chamber Annual Meeting Luncheon on September 16. The program begins at 11:45 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Grand Montana Convention Center. Tickets are available by calling 406-245-4111 or at BillingsChamber.com.



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