



ICEA

Innovation Award Submission

Northern Hamilton County Merger



Merger Overview



➤ The Chambers



NORTHERN HAMILTON COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Communities Working Together

Northern Hamilton County Chamber was made up of the four rural communities (Arcadia, Atlanta, Cicero, and Sheridan). It also consist of two school districts Hamilton Heights and Sheridan Schools. The membership base was 35 paying members. An average attendance of 5-10 people.



OneZone Chamber was made up of the two cities (Carmel and Fishers who merged in 2015). It consists of two school districts Carmel Clay and Hamilton Southeastern Schools. The membership base was 1,200 paying members.

Merger Process



1 Identify Key Stresses

First, identify where stress points would be for both organizations when it comes to identity. Keep two separate brands for first three years or until membership agrees to merger brands.

2 Meet with Stakeholders

Scheduled and met with 5 different stakeholder groups (Residents, Local Officials, Existing Members, Dropped Members, and Corporate Headquarters).

3 Structure Tier Dues

For our first two tiers the dollar amounts were fairly different. We have a three year increase at the discretion of the President & CEO of OneZone Chamber. We provide new and existing members of Northern Hamilton County those tiered due costs. 95% Retention Rate and have since doubled Membership to 90 Members.

4 Identity Objectives

When meeting with stakeholders we put together key advocacy areas. Childcare, Healthcare, Food Insecurity, Poverty, and Education. We also formed the NHC Business Council to look at these issues.

5 Legal Process

OneZone Chamber hired a law firm to work with us through the process to have transparency and that we met all the legal requirements including a membership vote that resulted in ZERO NO VOTES on the merger!

6 30-60-90 Day Rollout

Created a 30-60-90 Day Report to track retention, new members, and event engagement. Since the merger we have far exceeded our retention and new member numbers with an average attendance of 55 people per event compared to the 5-10 premerger.

Final Thoughts



We have found that to successfully merger a “Metro” and a “Small” Chamber together takes great patience and strong communication. It is understanding the needs of a more rural vs urban/suburban community while also understanding key areas where we share the same concerns (Childcare, Broadband, Healthcare, Education, Etc.).

Since the merger our businesses in the Northern part of our county have grown their connections while also having more people learn that our rural communities have great value and assets. We have partnered with both Sheridan and Hamilton Heights Schools to expand their students opportunities for internships and job shadowing while also being a strong voice for our small storefronts to our large employers in the North those being United Animal Health (Third Largest Animal Feed Company in the US and Beck’s Hybrids (Third Largest Seed Company in the US).

We are now taking on new advocacy efforts that have expanded our reach at the statehouse while (MORE IMPORTANTLY) creating strategic programming to help small businesses. As an example a local pizza place hosting us gets over 60 people in the door at once and a local morning event where we pay for each persons coffee brings in 60 NEW CUSTOMERS!

It has truly been an amazing merger and I encourage anyone who fears what their identity might look like to follow our process to be successful and that is why I truly believe this is one of the most innovative mergers and is a strong candidate for an ICEA Innovation Award.

PRESS LINKS:

- <https://shorturl.at/knqrZ>
- <https://shorturl.at/hABLY>
- <https://shorturl.at/ltBLV>