

Accreditation History

In 1964, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce began offering its Accreditation Program to state and local chambers of commerce nationwide. The program was designed to provide a continuous self-analysis of an organization's growth and development, with an opportunity for the organization to reassess its objectives and resources, program of work, procedures, and achievements. Since the Accreditation program's launch, more than 750 chambers have met the required organizational standards and have earned the title "Accredited."

Accreditation means that a local or state chamber of commerce has been recognized by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for having sound programs and organizational procedures and for continually creating and maintaining positive change in the community.

The U.S. Chamber Accreditation program establishes criteria for judging the quality of performance for state and local chambers of commerce, determines the extent to which organizations meet these criteria, and issues a public announcement that organizations are found to be of superior quality.

The U.S. Chamber understands that state and local chambers are diverse and have unique programs of work, operations, merit, dues structure, and program policies. As a result, the Accreditation program has separated the state chamber Accreditation process from the local chamber Accreditation process. Distinct applications have been created to recognize these differences.

Accreditation does not mean that an organization is perfect in every respect. Competent examiners acknowledge the quality of an organization and make recommendations where there are areas of deficiency and recognize chambers for areas of special distinction.

Effective chambers of commerce operate above and beyond minimum standards. As each chamber prepares its Accreditation application, it seeks ways of improving its performance in the community. These criteria or standards become a tool for management control and self-discipline.

Mission

The mission of the Accreditation program is to establish a standard of organizational competency and an objective set of criteria for assessment. The achievement of standards by state and local chambers as determined by an examining committee will be recognized with Accreditation by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

APPLICATION CRITERIA

There are nine sections of the Accreditation application:

1. Governance
2. Finance
3. Human Resources and Staff
4. Government Affairs
5. Program Development
6. Technology
7. Communication
8. Facilities
9. Benchmarking

The cover page of each section includes:

- The section's standards as defined by the U.S. Chamber
- A list of minimum qualifications to achieve Accreditation for that section
- A checklist of attachments

Each section of the application is broken down into Minimum Requirements and Additional Criteria. Minimum Requirements must be met for the chamber to be Accredited. Additional Criteria will be used to determine the Accreditation star rankings of an Accredited chamber.