

# Evaluating Chamber Services

*An Interactive Qualifying Project Report submitted to the faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science*

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## **Abstract**

Our goal was to analyze the satisfaction of the public, member businesses and key stakeholders with the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC). Through archival research, surveys of the public, a survey of member businesses and interviews with other chambers and pertinent community members we examined the Chamber's current practices and evaluated the success and value of its services. We concluded that the NICC could further improve its effectiveness by reconstructing its website to be more user-friendly and visually appealing, by providing new workshops to fit changing business needs and by encouraging greater awareness in the business community about housing and sustainability issues.

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## Authorship

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## **Executive Summary**

Chambers of commerce have existed for over 400 years and serve their communities by promoting business activities, facilitating networking and providing educational resources to both members and the general public. Businesses typically pay dues to a chamber in order to maintain membership. This membership then provides the business with advertising, access to networking events, and educational opportunities such as workshops.

The goal of this project was to identify how the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC) might enhance its programs and services to better meet member needs and stakeholder expectations. To accomplish this goal we identified four objectives. We:

- Identified and reviewed the current and best practices of other chambers comparable to the NICC;
- Assessed how well the NICC meets member needs and stakeholder expectations;
- Evaluated public satisfaction with selected NICC events; and
- Recommended ways of how the NICC should modify its delivery of programs and services.

We used a combination of background research, surveys, and interviews with experts, Chamber members and Chamber staff to fulfill these objectives. We received 206 responses to our survey of the public and 66 responses on the member survey. Both surveys investigated common misconceptions about the Chamber including questions about its relationship with the Visitor Services Center, the percentage of businesses that are members and whether or not the Chamber is a government entity. The member survey asked about member satisfaction with dues, services and sponsored events. Our interviews followed a similar line of questioning, however, they allowed us to gather more circumstantial information and suggestions from business owners and other experts in the field.

We found that both members and the public are very satisfied with the Chamber. Fifty members (76%) indicated that membership was a good value and 76% of the public rated the NICC as “above average” in terms of its positive impact on the community. Moreover, we found consistently that members knew the most about the NICC’s activities, followed by year-round residents, seasonal residents and, as expected, tourists who knew the least.

We identified three ways in which the NICC could improve member, public and stakeholder satisfaction:

- Reconstruct its website
- Refresh and augment the services offered; and,
- Explore new ways to disseminate information more effectively to businesses

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) the Chamber’s website was rated a 3.36 for its value to members. Although this value is above average, 5 out of 17 interviewees and 3 out of 3 chamber staff believe that the website is not as user-friendly, visually appealing or functional as it could be. In order to address this, we recommend that the NICC partners with a local website design company to improve the look and functionality of its website. Working with a local, Massachusetts-based website design company will enable the NICC to be more intimately involved in the design and maintenance of the website.

Through the member survey and interviews, we found that the networking and educational services offered by the NICC are generally positively viewed. In the member survey, networking events were rated as the most valuable service with an average overall rating of 3.81 out of 5. Nevertheless, 6 out of 12 interviewees indicated these events should be redesigned to attract more non-members. Increasing non-member attendance will provide members new networking opportunities and provide the NICC with potential new recruits. Thus, we recommend that the NICC explore ways to increase the number of non-members attending networking events. We also recommend that the NICC consider hosting a networking event for new member businesses and their mentors, since new members may be less intimidated at such events. This will help to draw new members into the networking scene and therefore broaden the networking pool. The

quality of workshops was generally rated above average, at 3.22 out of 5, although this service received the second lowest ranking among all services offered. In the member survey, 64% of participants stated that the current number of workshops was satisfactory but several new topics were suggested. For example, 63% of participants requested a workshop on social media skills and 48% requested workshops on small business strategies. Therefore, we recommend that the NICC explore new workshop topics. New workshop topics will help business owners stay current with changing business management trends and will likely encourage greater attendance. It is also recommended that the NICC consider broadcasting these workshops in webinar format to better reach business owners who travel off-island in the shoulder season, or who find it difficult to leave their premises during the day.

Finally, we determined that there are some misconceptions about the NICC. When asked if the NICC is a local government entity, 27% of members and 57% of the public were either incorrect or unable to answer. When asked about the proportion of businesses on the island that are members of the Chamber, members chose an incorrect number 46% of the time while the public chose incorrectly 64% of the time. These statistics lead us to recommend that the NICC undertake an educational campaign so that the public is more aware of the Chamber and its true roles in the community. Additionally, this campaign would help to distinguish the NICC from the Visitor Services Center (VSC), an organization which is commonly thought to be part of the NICC. By highlighting the positive and cooperative relationship between the NICC and the VSC, the public will be more knowledgeable about who truly sponsors which events and where NICC funds are going, leading to increased satisfaction with the NICC services. From interviews, it was also suggested that the Chamber educate employers on both housing and sustainability. Housing was identified as an extremely important issue affecting the business climate on Nantucket according to 11 out of 12 interviewees. Sustainability was mentioned as an increasingly important issue according to 3 out of 4 interviewees whom we questioned on this topic. We therefore recommended that the Chamber consider providing educational workshops and materials to business owners on sustainability and housing issues.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The U.S., state and local chambers of commerce have played a key role in promoting business and business interests over the past century. The US Chamber boast approximately 3000 member businesses and Massachusetts has approximately 100 chambers which collectively represent all the towns and regions in the Commonwealth (ZeeMaps, 2015). These organizations provide a variety of services to businesses and communities. Enhanced prestige and customer credibility is one of the advantages for businesses that are members of a chamber. For example, one survey found that when consumers know a business is a member, they are 49% more likely to think favorably of the business and 80% more likely to purchase from the business in the future (ACCE, 2010).

Chambers of commerce aim to provide their communities with economic growth, a collective voice for small businesses and networking opportunities for local companies. These goals are common to all chambers although they achieve them in different ways. Differences between services provided emerge as different regions have different needs, finances and capabilities. The Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC) is one such chamber. Nantucket's economy is unique in that it is dependent upon seasonal and tourist activities. The NICC believes that it is currently meeting its mission statement and goals. However, due to changing business environments and changing technologies, it would like to analyze its practices in comparison to other relevant chambers of commerce.

The main goal of this project is to identify how the NICC might enhance its programs and services to better meet its member's needs and stakeholder's expectations. In order to accomplish this goal, several smaller objectives were created. These include: identifying the best practices and programs at other chambers and comparing them to the NICC, assessing how well the NICC is meeting member and stakeholder expectations, evaluating public satisfaction with NICC events and recommending improvements to the NICC.

This analysis is performed through a variety of channels. To supplement our background research, we will conduct research concerning chambers in towns that are similar to Nantucket to identify their best practices. We will assess how well the NICC is meeting its member needs and stakeholder expectations through a series of in-depth interviews and surveys. These will be conducted with NICC members, the public and stakeholders, such as town officials, the honorary mayor and emergency response officials. Together this information will be used to determine which practices and services, if any, are underutilized. Based on the data we collect we will recommend how the NICC might adjust its programs, activities, services, and outreach efforts to better meet the needs of its members and other stakeholders on the island, including residents and visitors.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Chambers of commerce have become commonplace in the United States over the past two centuries. These organizations function to generate economic growth in a community by promoting the interests of their members through various programs and activities. The term “chamber of commerce” originated in France in the 16th century and, since then, the concept has expanded across the globe. In this section, we review the history of U.S. chambers of commerce and recent trends before we focus more closely on the services offered by the chambers in Massachusetts. Massachusetts has over 100 local chambers of commerce, most of which are members of the Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, which serves to represent them and their business members at the state level (Massachusetts Chamber, 2012). One of these chambers is the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC). The NICC is frequently compared to many other Cape and Islands chambers, such as Martha’s Vineyard Chamber and Provincetown Chamber.

### **2.1 Chamber of Commerce History and Common Themes**

The United States Chamber of Commerce comprises approximately 3,000 state and local chambers and claims a total membership of over three million businesses, ranging from ‘mom and pop’ shops to large corporations (Harkinson, 2009, 2). Formally, a chamber of commerce is defined as an organization composed of businesses seeking to further their collective interests while also stimulating the economy in their communities (ACCE, n.d.). The phrase “chamber of commerce” first appeared in 1599 in Marseille, France (ICC, n.d.). These networks of businesses and their owners began forming in larger communities throughout France due to the need for increased economic activity and the camaraderie and shared goals of small businesses.

Contemporary chambers of commerce still share several common goals which include building communities, attracting people to these communities, increasing prosperity, representing a unified voice of the employers, and reducing transactional friction through ample inter-business communication (ACCE, n.d.).

Chambers of commerce can be either private law chambers or public law chambers. Public law chambers are chambers in which the government sets regulations for the chamber, elections are performed through a governmental selection process and membership is mandatory for all

enterprises (ICC, n.d.). These types of chambers were founded on the French chamber's first principles and are prevalent in most of Europe, Asia and Africa. Private law chambers, however, are not governed by any federal statutes, allowing for greater variance among chambers. Generally, private law chambers value laissez faire economics and members are free to join and leave the chamber at will (ICC, n.d.). These kinds of chambers were formed on the founding principles of chambers in Great Britain and examples can be found today in North America, South America and Switzerland.

Chambers of commerce have existed in the United States for over two hundred years and new chambers are still forming. While most United States chambers work closely with the government, they are not government organizations. Chambers of commerce in the United States follow a private law system. Members voluntarily join these organizations and elect leaders through a group voting process. It is important to note that membership in a chamber usually refers to the business as a whole, rather than individual employees or business owners. Although employees at a company may refer to themselves as members, this is technically incorrect. Most often, several high level employees at a business will work closely with the chamber to discuss pertinent issues as they arise, such as governmental lobbying or voting for new chamber executives. Membership in a typical chamber in the United States may range from a few dozen businesses to several thousand. The size of a local chamber depends on a number of factors, including geographical area served (e.g. small town or a large city), membership benefits offered and the economic vitality of the region served.

In exchange for the chamber's benefits, members pay dues. These dues are commonly based on the size and revenue generated by the company, meaning that a business of ten employees would pay less than a business of thirty and a startup business of fifteen would pay less than a franchised business of fifteen. Dues may also vary according to membership levels and services offered. These monetary dues range in price from chamber to chamber, however, the money is always intended to go towards the collective good of the group. Dues typically go toward advertisements, large publicity events, member workshops, new member recruitment and member's networking activities such as luncheons and outings.

In order to further their community outreach, companies may choose to maintain active membership within several chambers. This simply requires payment of the membership dues of each chamber. Businesses can also join a demographically targeted chamber, such as a women's chamber, a homosexual chamber, or an African American chamber. These specifically targeted chambers offer the same benefits as a traditional chamber while bringing employers of a similar background together. This, in turn, may allow for easier lobbying and defining of collective interests.

The United States Chamber of Commerce has many positive attributes. The Chamber, which has its headquarters in Washington D.C., serves primarily to lobby the federal government on behalf of businesses. The Chamber also lobbies for American businesses' rights globally. This large lobbying power allows smaller businesses, as well as larger corporations, to be supported under the umbrella of the larger United States Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has also lobbied for several noteworthy political causes. These causes include supporting the No Child Left Behind Act in 2006 as well as supporting Free Trade Agreements with the Dominican Republic, Singapore and Chile (Timeline, 2015). Additionally, the United States Chamber of Commerce began a conference, known as America's Small Business Summit, in 2004. This conference brings over 1,000 small business owners from across the United States together to discuss business goals, networking skills and legislative concerns (Timeline, 2015).

While the U.S. Chamber is a venerated institution, its fundraising, lobbying and political activities have been controversial. Even its claims regarding the number of businesses it represents have been called into question. Harkinson (2009, 1) revealed that the US Chamber misrepresented its size as over 3 million businesses, when it actually represents about 3,000 chambers that collectively have 3 million members. As a result of this, the Chamber had to revise these claims on its websites and within other publications. Unfortunately, the number still appears in some published literature.

Along with this controversy, the Chamber has faced several complaints from current members, prior members and non-members alike. One chief complaint is that the United States Chamber of Commerce receives 55% of its funding from just 16 anonymous donors (Fang, 2010). This figure



raises questions about who is influencing chamber policies as well as questions about how effectively other member's voices are being heard. Some people fear the United States Chamber of Commerce may favor the legislative and business interests of large donors over the interests desired by all members.

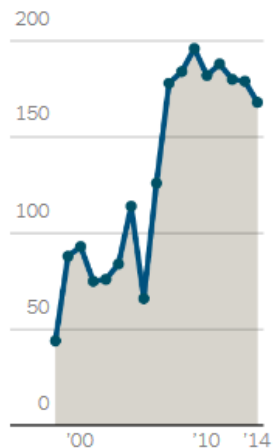
In 1997, Thomas Donahue took over as Chief Executive Officer of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and through his leadership the Chamber has grown to the largest size in its history (Hakim, 2015). The U.S. Chamber is now the largest lobbying group in America, bigger than the second, third and fourth lobbying groups combined (Fang, 2010). In 2010, the Chamber spent \$132 million on governmental lobbying. Although companies join the U.S. Chamber precisely because of its impressive lobbying power, many members are concerned about the Chamber's spending and lobbying interests and public protest groups have urged member companies to abandon the U.S. Chamber (Fang, 2010). As recently reported in the New York Times, the United States Chamber of Commerce grew tremendously between 2000 and 2010 under Thomas Donahue's leadership, however there was a slight drop in the number of lobbyists and revenues in 2007 as a result of the economic recession (Hakim, 2015). The year 2010 represented the best overall year for the Chamber where lobbyists, spending and revenue were at an all-time high, although each of these indicators has declined since 2010. These fluctuations can be seen in the New York Times' graphic in Figure 1.

## Creating a Giant

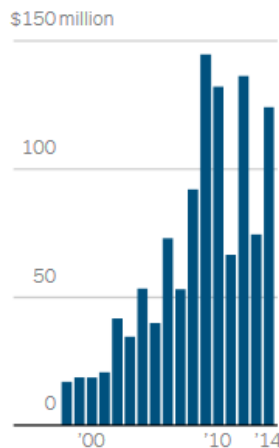
Under the leadership of Thomas Donohue, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has transformed into the country's largest lobbying group.

### U.S. Chamber of Commerce:

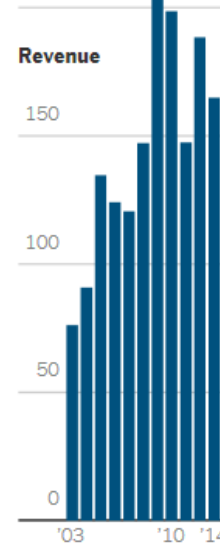
#### Number of lobbyists



#### Spending on lobbying



#### Revenue



**Figure 1: United States Chamber of Commerce Statistics from 2000 to 2014**

(Hakim, 2015)

As the Chamber grew and began lobbying for more controversial policies and legislation, larger members such as CVS, Apple and Nike left the Chamber. Some businesses feel as though the Chamber does not accurately reflect their values, and therefore choose to leave the organization. Some businesses may also consider joining organizations similar to the Chamber, such as business clubs, women in business movement and entrepreneurial networking groups. This trend for members to leave the Chamber and independently market themselves has likely resulted in the gradual decline, as can be seen in the graphs reported in Figure 1, from 2010 to 2014.

The United States Chamber of Commerce has been involved in several unpopular political decisions. In 2010, the U.S. Chamber spent 32 million dollars in political donations, 94% of which went to candidates who did not believe in climate change (Fang, 2010). This climate change stance then resulted in both Apple and Nike leaving the U.S. Chamber of Commerce later that year (Bogage, 2015). The U.S. Chamber also lobbied against the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, an act which aims to provide workplace equality for women, as well as opposing the

regulation of BPA, a chemical which is commonly found in plastics and has been known to cause genetic mutations (Fang, 2010). More recently in July 2015, CVS Health Corporation left the U.S. Chamber of Commerce when newspaper accounts revealed that the Chamber had lobbied foreign governments to block the regulation of tobacco sales (Bogage, 2015). As the United States Chamber of Commerce continues to lobby on controversial issues, it is expected that additional members with opposing views may abandon the Chamber. Of course, the Chamber is intended to lobby on behalf of its members in large and public forums, and although some members do not agree fully with the Chamber's general lobbying views, most members still treasure the legislative support gained with Chamber membership.

## **2.2 Recent Trends and Research on the Role of Chambers of Commerce**

In spite of the role that local chambers play in promoting business, the number of members in local chambers has declined in recent years. A 2015 study found that “16 of the 25 largest chambers are reporting decreasing numbers and overall membership dropping a little less than 1 percent from June 2014” (Halpern, 2015). Although this is not a large decline, it is also not the first time the numbers have fallen. Concerns about declining membership are sufficiently widespread amongst both the U.S. Chamber and local chambers. In fact, specialized organizations were founded with the sole mission to help chambers gain members. They assist chambers with membership retention, improving chamber incentives and supporting other miscellaneous chamber goals (Chamber Strategies, 2010). In the past, chambers have attempted to increase membership through new features and benefits offered to members. These benefits ranged from new workshops and networking events to ceasing to increase membership dues (Reed, 2012). After the membership number stabilized, these features were retained in hopes of fostering further growth.

Social networking and digital technology may be contributing to this decline in membership. With the proliferation of powerful social networking tools and digital advertising, many businesses are no longer automatically partnering with the chamber of commerce in their area. The World Wide Web allows businesses to not only advertise locally, but worldwide, with just a few clicks of the mouse. In contrast, a local chamber of commerce influences only the surrounding establishments and towns. As a vacation destination, advertising to as many

potential customers as possible is essential for businesses on Nantucket to grow and prosper. With the cheaper option of online advertising, however, businesses may now consider conducting their own advertising without help from their local chamber.

To combat this trend, many chambers are trying to provide resources for businesses to market themselves more effectively and safely on the internet. For example, the U.S Chamber of Commerce offers its members free cyber security and data protection software (U.S Chamber, n.d.). This resource is particularly helpful to small businesses because they are a popular target for cyber-attacks. Large businesses often have the funds to protect themselves and their customer's information online, where smaller businesses may not typically have access to these resources. The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce in Gloucester, Massachusetts also uses the internet to assist its small businesses by giving them access to the SME Toolkit. This toolkit is a software which provides small businesses with free training on topics such as tax information, human resources and managerial skills (Massachusetts Export Center, n.d.). The internet is not only a place to share information, but also a place to interact with people and experience events from home. The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce offers its member webinars, or web-based seminars. These webinars are workshops or lectures that are viewed by their audience online, usually through video conferencing software like Skype or Google Hangout (Webopedia, 2015). They allow members the opportunity to participate in seminars that they otherwise could not attend. With more online help and tools for small businesses, chambers can improve their membership rates.

Beside the growing emphasis on digital tools and resources, chambers offer a variety of more traditional services to attract local businesses and these benefits offered are often similar from chamber to chamber. One of the largest benefits offered to members of all chambers is obtained by simply being a member. By tying a business to the chamber, the business is shown to have passed the standards of the local chamber's membership process. Therefore, by just being part of a chamber, the reputation of the business will improve (Noel and Lockett, 2013, 30). This will then attract more customers. The Schapiro Group conducted a 2,000 person survey and found that "[w]hen consumers know that a small business is a member of the chamber of commerce, they are 49% more likely to think favorably of it and 80% more likely to purchase goods or

services from the company in the future”(ACCE, 2012). In all categories of business, the company image was perceived to be higher when told the business was part of a chamber.

In addition, most chambers of commerce promote other incentives including cheaper advertising and contacts with other firms to entice businesses to join. Although nearly every chamber offers a set of benefits to members, not every chamber offers the same features because in some communities certain benefits are not applicable. Often, membership gives access to other opportunities, such as workshops, which enhance the human capital of these chambers (Lacho and Brockman, 2015). These workshops are common among chambers and cover a range of topics depending on the location; however, all workshops are intended to improve businesses and their reputations. As the business grows, it better reflects the chamber; thereby increasing its appeal to prospective members.

Aside from incentives to attract businesses to the chamber, another option is to help start up new small businesses. The chamber of commerce is often seen as an associate for only big corporations, much like the U.S Chamber of Commerce, as larger corporations tend to steer its lobbying power. While the U.S Chamber leans towards the large amount of money offered by giant companies, the U.S. Chamber is actually made up of 96% small businesses, or businesses with 100 or fewer employees (U.S Chamber of Commerce, n.d.).

### **2.3 Chambers of Commerce in Massachusetts**

In Massachusetts there are over one hundred chambers of commerce (Massachusetts Chamber, 2012). Some of these represent a single town such as Provincetown, but in many cases multiple towns will join together to form a larger regional chamber such as the Metrowest Chamber of Commerce which represents the towns of Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Natick, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, and Westborough. The location of each Massachusetts chamber is shown in Figure 2 and a complete list of these chambers can be found in Appendix A.



**Figure 2: Chambers of Commerce in Massachusetts, 2015**  
(Zeemaps, 2015)

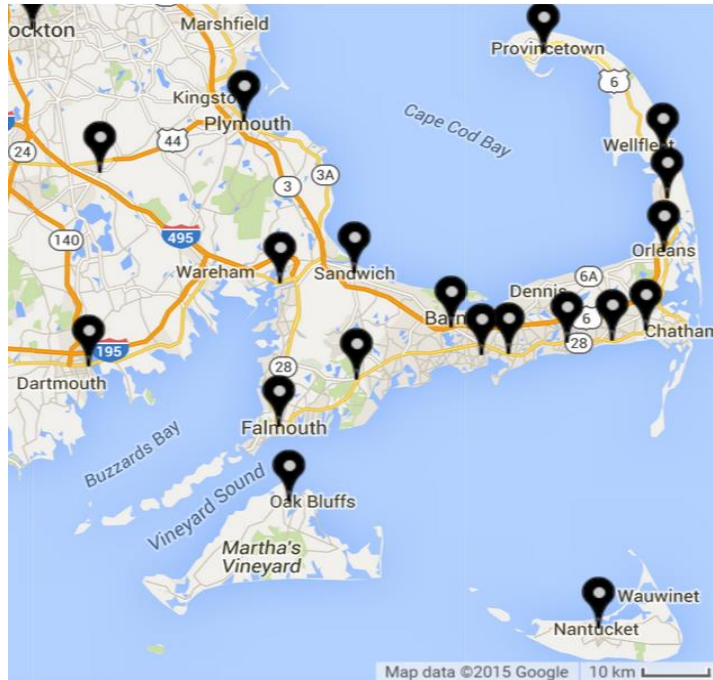
Many of these local chambers are members of the Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. The Massachusetts Chamber is closely associated with the state government and focuses much of its energy and resources on political matters that affect local businesses in the state. Like other state chambers, it lobbies government agencies at both a state and local level to advance the welfare of its chamber and businesses members. According to the Chamber website “The Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce provides legislative advocacy, marketing, networking, educational and informational programs for businesses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Chamber also provides managerial services for local chambers of commerce” (Massachusetts Chamber, 2012). Additionally, state chambers have been particularly active in recent senate elections both in supporting candidates and pushing for policy change. This political influence will then directly impact the various regional chambers that the state chamber represents.

There have also been many cases where a local chamber fights for a political or social issue. One such example is the building of a new bridge over the Cape Cod Canal. As a result of poor traffic flow to and from Cape Cod, many residents and business owners have lobbied for a new bridge to be built, while many others have been opposed, due primarily to the high cost. The CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, Wendy Northcross, has not been shy about her opinion. She has adamantly pushed for construction and claims that the cost is affordable and well worth it (Cassidy 2013). Northcross, like many other leaders of chambers are in positions where they can marshal considerable support, especially from the business sector, and therefore make a large impact on their communities.

## **2.4 The Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce**

The Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC) is one of many regional chambers within the state. It was founded in 1934 with the goal to promote the interests of businesses on the island. Currently having around 700 members, the chamber seeks to continue to improve business opportunities and promote economic growth on the island while preserving its traditions (NICC, n.d.).

The NICC is one of 16 chambers of commerce within the Cape and Islands region. These chambers can be seen on a map in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Chambers of Commerce in the Cape and Islands**

As can be seen in Figure 3, the NICC is representative of the whole island of Nantucket, while Cape Cod contains both town chambers and regional chambers. A listing of the 16 town and regional chambers which comprise the Cape and Islands region can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Listing of Chambers of Commerce in Cape Cod and the Islands**

Chamber	Location	Chamber	Location
Cape Cod Canal Region	Buzzards Bay	Nantucket Island	Nantucket
Cape Cod	Centerville	Orleans	Orleans
Chatham	Chatham	Provincetown	Provincetown
Eastham	Eastham	Sandwich	Sandwich
Falmouth	Falmouth	Martha's Vineyard	Vineyard Haven
Harwich	Harwich	Wellfleet	Wellfleet
Hyannis Area	Hyannis	Dennis	West Dennis
Mashpee	Mashpee	Yarmouth Area	West Yarmouth

Like Nantucket, many of the chambers featured in Table 1 face similar business climates due to their proximal locations, tourist seasons and Massachusetts laws. These chambers all serve similar markets of tourists and locals, as well as serve as a legislative force for beach



communities and vacation destinations. As a result, these chambers may often look upon each other's tactics to deal with the summer swell, maximizing profit and maintaining a growing and happy member base.

Along with chambers similar in location to the NICC, it is important to assess chambers of similar function to the NICC. Several chambers of commerce serve similar communities to Nantucket but in different circumstances such as a different states, countries or tourist seasons. For example, Salem, Massachusetts faces a similar swell to Nantucket's summer season, however, this swell occurs from mid-September until mid-November. These comparable chambers and their services provided can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: Matrix of Chambers versus Services Provided**

Service	Nantucket	Salem	Martha's Vineyard	Cape Cod Canal Region	Greater Boston	Bar Harbor	Worcester Regional	Falmouth	Provincetown	Halifax
Listed on Chamber Website	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X
Discounted Health Insurance	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Networking Events	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Advertisement in Guidebook	X	X				X		X	X	
Business Referrals	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Member Workshops	X		X	X		X	X			
Sponsorship Signage at Events	X	X			X		X			
Logo on Emails to Members	X									
Energy Program						X				
Intern Access							X			
Notarization										X

The chambers studied in Table 2 serve resort or tourist communities in areas geographically near to Nantucket, except for Halifax, Nova Scotia which we chose for comparison because they each experience a reliance on tourism similar to Nantucket. These communities share the unique challenge of dealing with enormous variations in population between the peak tourism season and off season. This matrix displays which services are most popular among chambers as well as services that are unique to specific chambers. Many of the chambers analyzed provide services already in place at the NICC and several of the services provided by the NICC are not provided by other local chambers, such as some of the extensive forms of advertisement and exposure. These common services have been successful across a variety of chambers with varying

characteristics. There are several services, however, that the Nantucket chamber currently does not offer. These include energy programs and notarization. These offerings have been successfully incorporated into several other chambers which may mean that it would benefit Nantucket, and therefore the NICC members, to do the same.

One of the biggest draws for members of chambers is the amount of advertising provided. With the revenue generated from membership fees, the NICC and other chambers host events to increase return for their members. These events are especially common in communities that rely on seasonal tourism such as Nantucket, Salem, and Martha's Vineyard. Martha's Vineyard, like Nantucket, experiences a short tourist season, followed by a long period of low population and economic activity. Due to the fact that both economies are largely driven by tourism, this fluctuation poses a threat to stability (Takahashi, 1996, 29). As a result, both chambers of commerce host events designed to increase revenue in the offseason to create a consistent growth.

One helpful service may be to provide more entrepreneurial workshops to chamber members. Along with several other local chambers of commerce, the NICC is considering the value of providing these workshops to its members. The Metrowest Chamber of Commerce, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, and other chambers have done just that. The Metrowest Chamber of Commerce, located in Framingham, Massachusetts, facilitates an educational forum known as The Entrepreneurs Connection. This program consists of multiple workshops that develop the skills necessary to operate a business (Metrowest, 2015). The Worcester Regional Chamber also has a similar program which focuses on the numerous college graduates in the city, Start-up Worcester. This program gave twelve companies a stimulus package to help recruit new businesses to the chamber and incubate them into stronger organizations (Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2014).

## **2.5 Summary**

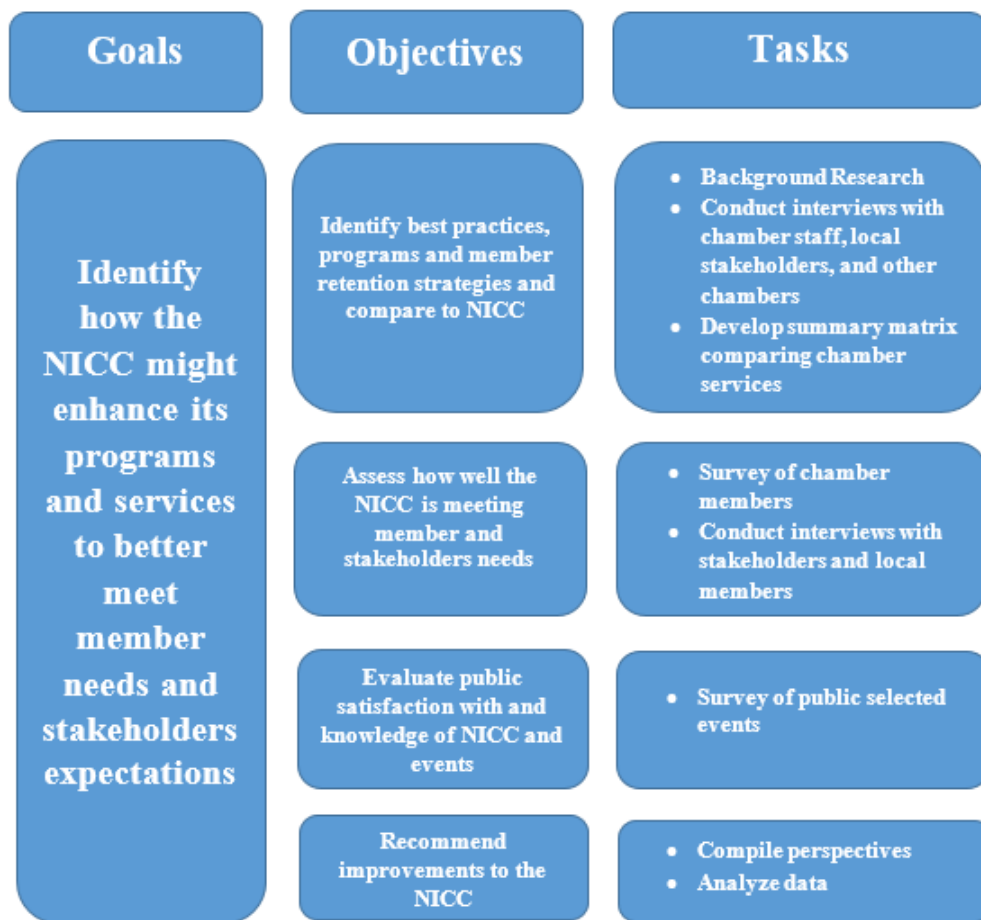
In order to remain relevant in a time of progressive technology, chambers of commerce must adapt to their members' changing needs. The chamber serves as a large lobbying force which can be seen as both positive and negative by businesses. Generally, businesses enjoy the large lobbying power acquired when joining a particular chamber. However, chambers often lobby on controversial issues at a local, state and national level. Due to the controversy of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as well as ideological differences, some chambers including the NICC have chosen to remain unaffiliated. Businesses often see chambers of commerce as a place to develop their business and their personal skills while networking. This core need is still a major part of the chamber's function, however, newly developing aspects such as social media and constant access to review websites such as Yelp and Trip Advisor greatly change the business market. Consumers are now able to research an establishment on their cell phones moments before deciding to enter the business. Now, chambers are expected to help businesses manage this instantaneous source of information while also providing more traditional services. Due to this, the Nantucket Island Chamber of commerce may have room for improvement in regards to its advertising, networking opportunities and incentive programs after analyzing the benefits offered by other local, tourist-based chambers of commerce as well as the needs of the NICC's current member base.

### 3.0 Methodology

The goal of this project was to identify how the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC) might enhance its programs and services to better meet member needs and stakeholder expectations. To accomplish this goal we identified four objectives. We:

- Identified and reviewed the current and best practices of other chambers comparable to the NICC;
- Assessed how well the NICC is meeting member needs and stakeholder expectations;
- Evaluated public satisfaction with selected NICC events; and
- Recommended how the NICC should modify its delivery of programs and services.

Figure 4 provides a visual overview of our goal, objectives and related tasks.



**Figure 4: Overview of Goal, Objectives and Related Tasks**

In an effort to identify current and best practices, we will supplement our ongoing background research with phone interviews of staff at selected chambers in Massachusetts. To assess how well the NICC is meeting member needs and stakeholder expectations, we interviewed NICC stakeholders and conducted a survey of members. To evaluate public satisfaction with NICC events we surveyed participants at two selected community events, Christmas Stroll and the Halloween Parade. Based on the findings from our interviews and surveys, we recommended how the NICC might improve its programs, activities and services to better meet the needs of its members and the expectations of stakeholders and members of the public on the island.

### **3.1 Generic Interview Protocols**

The overall process for conducting interviews consisted of identifying interviewees, setting up a time and place with the interviewee and then interviewing. We obtained and selected initial contacts through our literature review process as well as our liaison, Dr. Janet Schulte. A snowball sampling technique was also used, as we asked each interviewee for other possible people of interest to interview. Before each interview, our group explored the background, qualifications and positions held by each individual interviewee. We established initial contact with the interviewee via phone call where we attempted to schedule the interview. If we did not receive a response within three business days, we followed-up with another phone call or email to solicit participation and to set up a time and location for the interview. Our preference was to conduct face-to-face interviews, but if this was not possible or comfortable for our interviewee, we conducted the interview by phone, online conference or, as a last resort, email dialogue. Our group had all researchers present at the interview, two being the scribes and other being the interviewer. The interviews were not recorded and the interviewees' names were kept confidential. Interviewees also had the right to skip any question without reason and to end the interview at any point. The script for our interviews, as seen in Appendix B, was developed based on the information gathered from our background research along with input from our advisors and our sponsor. We used a core set of interview questions but added other questions tailored to the knowledge and expertise of the interviewee as discussed below.

### **3.2 Generic Survey Protocols**

As well as conducting interviews, our team also developed and implemented online and in-person surveys. The overall procedure for administering surveys involved developing the questions, administering the surveys to the primary demographics and collecting and analyzing the results. We conducted two different surveys: one for members of the NICC and another for the general public. With permission from our sponsor, the team used the chamber's member-to-member mailing list to send out the member survey. This survey was conducted online via Google forms, which aided in data compilation and analysis. The survey for the public was conducted in person using paper copies. The group conducted the public surveys during large NICC events including the Halloween Parade on October 31st and Christmas Stroll on December 5th to enhance the sample size and response. There were 103 responses from the Halloween survey and 100 responses from the Christmas Stroll survey. These responses were collected and analyzed using simple descriptive statistics.

Both surveys and the interview script were pretested. First, the non-member survey was pretested because the non-member survey was the first data-collection method utilized. To pretest this survey, team members approached 25 members of the public on the streets of Nantucket to read the survey and assess if it is user-friendly, clear and concise. Edits were then made in conjunction with our advisor and sponsor. Each pretesting opportunity took the participant no more than five minutes. The member survey and interview prompt were also pretested in a similar manner, however, they were critiqued by the 4 NICC employees, the team's classmates and advisors instead of the public. Also, the member survey and interview prompt went through more rounds of editing due to the extra time and larger material contents. After the final edits were made the revised materials was sent to our sponsor and advisors for final review and approval before carrying out the data collection.

### **3.3 Objective 1: Identify Current and Best Practices**

As discussed in the background chapter, we conducted a preliminary evaluation of the programs, activities, and services offered by a sample of chambers of commerce in Massachusetts that are

similar to the NICC. We supplemented these data by conducting in-depth phone interviews with the selected chambers, as well as interviews with various on-island stakeholders, chamber members and non-members.

These interviews followed the general procedures stated above. The general script for these interviews along with a preamble of participant's rights can be seen in Appendix B. These questions were then selected for relevance depending on the interviewee. We consulted with our sponsor and advisors to refine this script before we began interviewing. We began each interview by reading a preamble which explained the project background and the participant's rights. These rights include the right to remain anonymous, the right to not answer any question and the right to review the final paper if directly quoted. The interviews took no more than twenty minutes.

Additionally, the interviews were utilized to assess the current practices of the NICC, which feeds into Objective 2. Namely, interviews conducted with NICC employees provided a different, inside perspective which yielded unique information that we did not gather from any other demographic.

### **3.4 Objective 2: Assess NICC Member Needs and Stakeholder Expectations**

In order to assess the current practices of the NICC and how well these practices meet member needs and stakeholder expectations, we conducted an electronic survey of approximately 660 members. This survey yielded 66 responses, which is a 10% response rate. To enhance likely response rates, maintain anonymity, and avoid compromising the integrity of the address list, we asked our sponsor to send an email request to members with a link to the survey online. The survey was developed in Google Forms

We consulted with our sponsor to develop suitable text for the 'cover' email that explains the nature and purpose of our research. We offered an incentive to members, in the form of gift

cards, to encourage survey participation. In addition to the explanation in the ‘cover’ email, the survey included a short preamble explaining the anonymous, voluntary nature of the survey and the purpose of the research. The survey instrument consisted of a series of open-ended and multiple choice questions concerning member knowledge about and use of chamber services and programs. The survey also asked about services that the members might want the Chamber to provide in the future. These survey questions along with their respective preamble can be seen in Appendix C

### **3.5 Objective 3: Evaluate Public Satisfaction with NICC events**

In order to assess the public’s satisfaction with NICC events, a survey of the public was administered at two key events: the Halloween Parade on October 31, 2015 and Christmas Stroll on December 5, 2015. NICC had no responsibility for organizing the Halloween Parade, until this year when it established a formal collaboration with the Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror. The NICC is the primary organizer of the Christmas Stroll, which has been an annual event since 1973 and draws several thousand visitors, seasonal residents and year-round residents each year. The purpose of the survey was not to evaluate public opinions about the particular event, however, but was intended to use these events as a means to access a larger sample of the public more easily and efficiently than might be possible through other forms of convenience sampling.

These surveys were conducted face-to-face by members of the team using paper copies to record responses. Team members were stationed at key locations such as the docks and Main St. during these events. We sought the implied consent of participants using a short preamble. The survey took no longer than 3 minutes. A copy of the non-member survey questions can be seen in Appendix D. Survey responses were coded and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis using simple descriptive statistics.



### **3.6 Objective 4: Make Recommendations for Improvement to the NICC**

The data obtained through research, interviews and surveys formed the foundation of our recommendations. Based on the findings from our interviews and surveys, we recommended how the NICC can improve its programs, activities, and services to better meet the needs of its members and the expectations of stakeholders.

### **3.7 Summary**

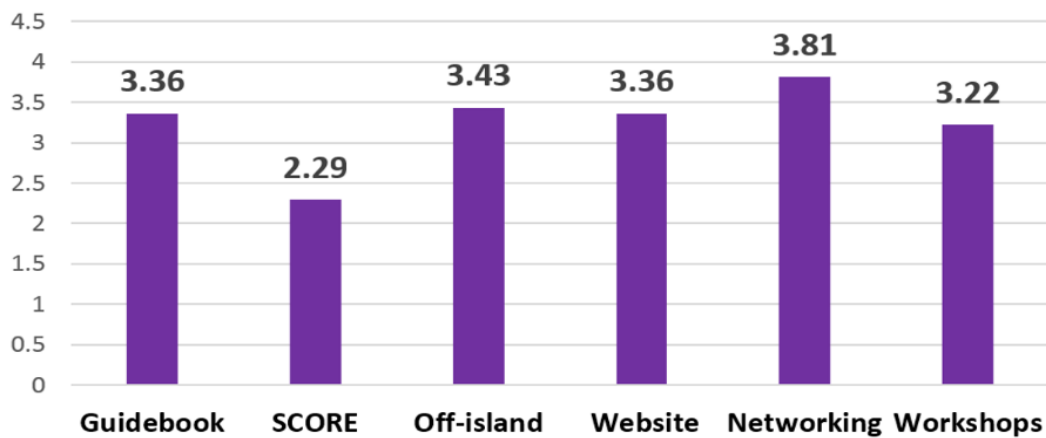
Largely due to the assistance and services they provide, the local chambers serve many important functions. Businesses see them as a way to grow and develop while making new connections. Individuals focus on the sponsored events that bolster economic growth. While the NICC offers a wide array of benefits to its members such as advertising at events and electronically, networking opportunities and involvement in incentive programs, there still may be room for improvement after analyzing the benefits offered by other local, tourist-based chambers of commerce.

## **4.0 Findings and Analysis**

In order to remain relevant in today's changing times, chambers of commerce must be flexible and provide their members with up to date services, workshops and information. Nantucket experiences a summer swell, where businesses typically earn a large portion of their yearly profits, followed by a shoulder season where tourism slows and businesses typically experience a decline in sales. In order to survive in this market, businesses rely on the Nantucket Chamber, among other organizations that sponsor events, to extend the busy season by bringing tourism to the island in the quiet months. The NICC does this by hosting events such as the Halloween Parade, Christmas Stroll and Daffodil Weekend, all of which draw tourists and therefore business to the island. Through surveys of the public and chamber members as well as interviews with pertinent business owners and stakeholders, we found that the issues of major concern were workforce housing, the quality of the pool of workers available and having social media savvy business owners.

### **4.1 General Findings**

Both the public and member survey as well as interviews suggested that the Chamber is perceived positively in the community. When asked to rate the NICC's positive impact on the community from 1-5 where 1 was the least positive and 5 was the most positive, the public awarded the NICC an average score of 4.3 out of 5. This score is extremely high and suggests that the public understands the large and valuable economic impact that the NICC has on the community. Similarly, the members also were generally pleased with the services and events offered by the NICC. When asked if the NICC membership fee represents a good value, 76% of respondents said yes. Additionally, a majority of both the public and members knew a fair amount about the Chamber, including that it is not a governmental agency. Out of the public, 43%, or the largest category, selected that the Chamber was not a governmental agency while 73% of members selected the right answer. Members also ranked 5 out of 6 selected Chamber services as above average. A graph depicting these services and their respective average rankings where 1 is least valuable and 5 is most valuable can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Average Value of Services (n=66)**

The data come from a question which asked members to rank services from 1-5 where 1 is least valuable and 5 is most valuable. These scores were then compiled and averaged to form the chart of average rankings reported in Figure 5. Additionally, interviews were used to confirm these data as well as to discuss potential improvements. From these discussions as well as the data, several main themes emerged.

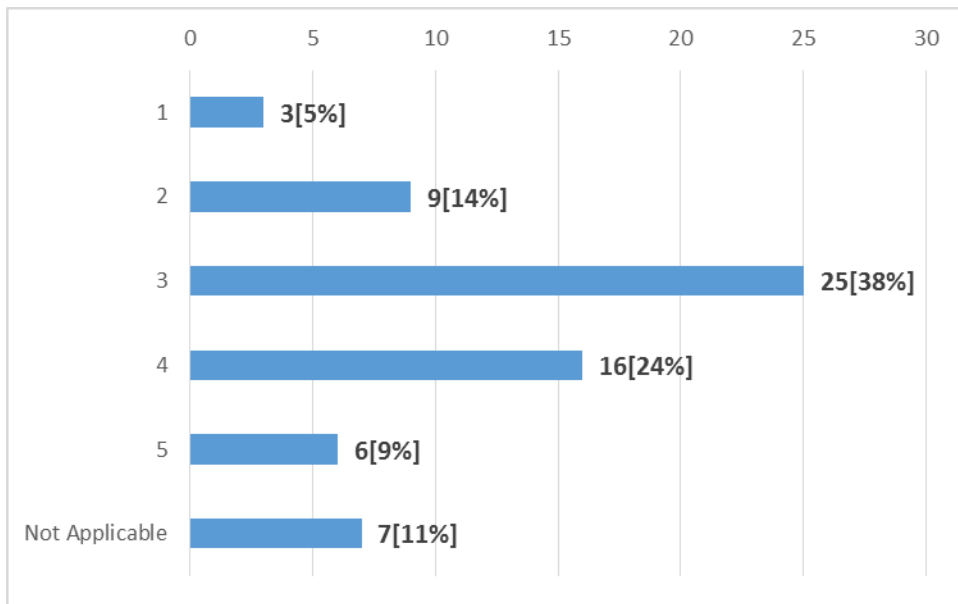
## **4.2 Social Media Savvy Business Owners**

Due to rapid advances in technology, some business owners may find themselves left behind on the use of new online tactics and trends. Through academic research it was shown that businesses which market themselves on social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Yelp received more business due to their internet presence (Forbes, 2015). Interviewees also resoundingly echoed this sentiment, as 16 out of 17 interviewees said that social media was a large key to running a successful business. Today, it is common for a visiting family to Google search a store, restaurant or taxi company before using their services (Forbes, 2015). To be successful towards this market of people, interviewees believe that businesses should understand how to display a visually attractive social media page, complete with positive reviews. Additionally, business owners could benefit from learning how to eliminate or hide negative feedback on websites such as Yelp, TripAdvisor or Kayak. To combat this, chambers often provide their members with social media skills workshops which allow them to familiarize themselves with the programs as well as to learn more sophisticated features such as how to eliminate negative reviews (cite & provide concrete numbers from email responses with other chambers).

### 4.3 Workshops

The Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce needs to respond to rapid changes in market and businesses conditions. To address these changes, the Chamber offers workshops and seminars on new topics including newly developed software and recently instituted laws. Although these workshops are valuable to members, data collected from a sample of 66 members show that the workshops are, in fact, the second least valuable service, which can be seen in the graphic shown in Figure 5.

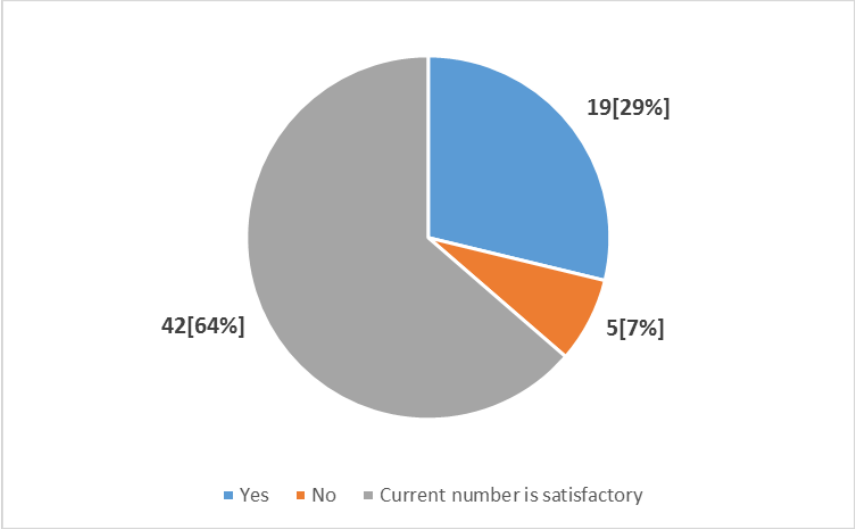
Member workshops scored an average of 3.22 out of 5, with 7 survey participants or 10.6% of participants ranking the workshops as not applicable, meaning that 10.6% of participants have likely not attended an NICC sponsored workshop. Data from the member survey question which asked participants to rank how valuable they find member workshops can be seen in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Member Survey Workshop Ranking (n=66)**

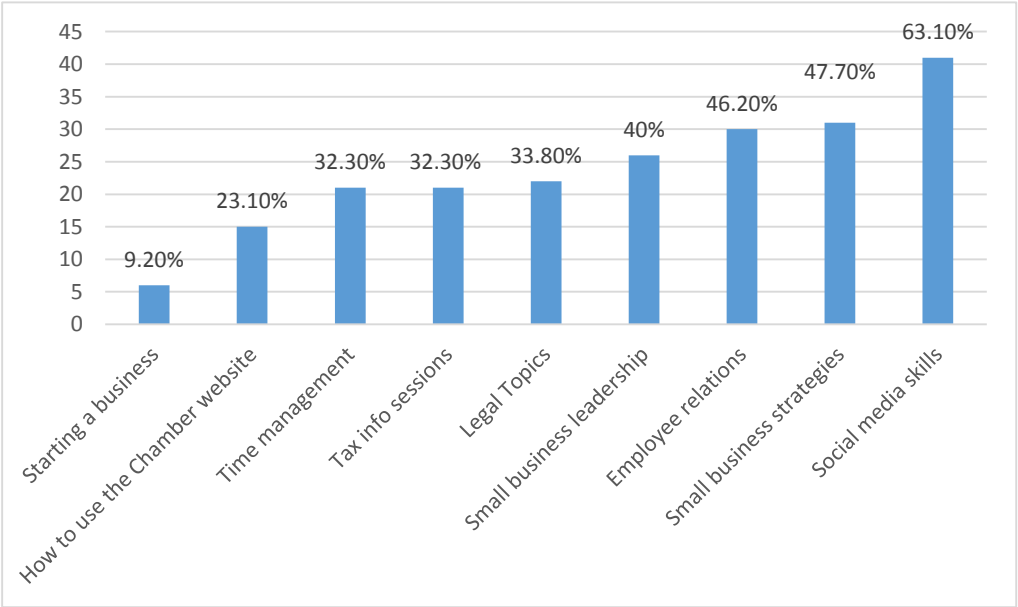
Figure 6 shows that the graph is shifted slightly higher in ranking, with an average score of 3.22. This score indicates that members generally find the value of workshops to be neutral; however, a significant number (11%) of participants ranked workshops as not applicable, suggesting that they likely have never attended a workshop.

When asked about their satisfaction with the currently offered number of workshops, 63.6% of survey participants stated that the current number of workshops is satisfactory. Data from the member survey supporting this can be seen in Figure 7.



**Figure 7: Member Survey Evaluation of Increasing the Number of Workshops (n=66)**

Together, the value of member workshops and the contentment with the number of workshops indicate that member workshops are valuable to those who use them, but underutilized and not addressing the most relevant topics. Workshops could be targeted towards new topics, depending on member’s current needs. Data from the 66 member survey question about the most desired workshop type are reported in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Most Desired Workshops (n=66)**

In our member survey of 66 members, the most requested workshop was Social Media Skills, with 63.1% of participants stating that it would benefit them as business owners. The next most requested workshops with 31 and 30 respondents respectively were Small Business Strategies and Employee Management.

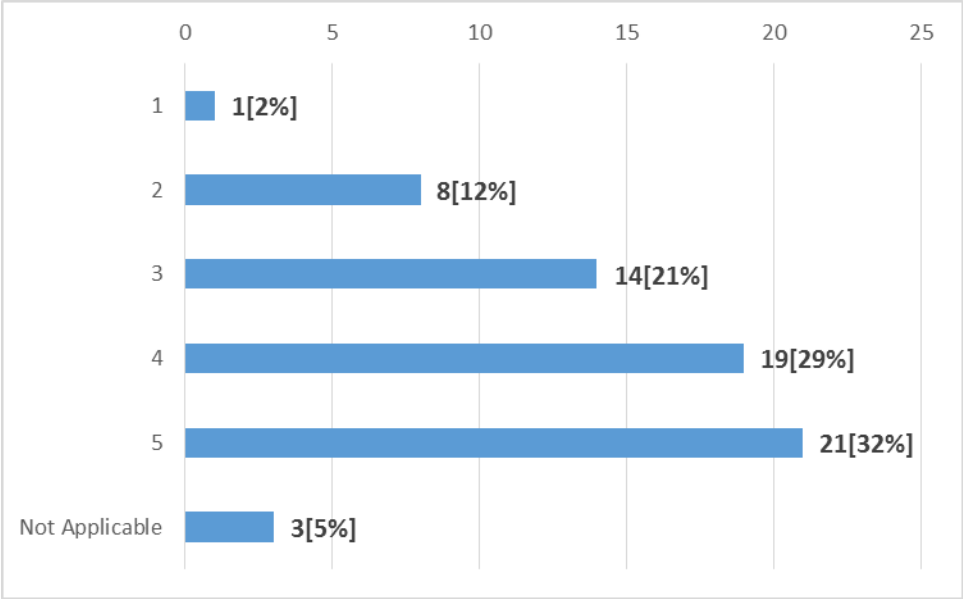
#### **4.4 Webinars**

Another item which can greatly impact the success of business owners is the availability of workshops. Workshops such as social media skills and up to date business law classes are useful and desired. However, their reach is limited by the many business owners who travel off island in the shoulder season. Many people agree with this observation, including 1 member survey commentator and 7 out of 17 interview participants who stated that they could not attend workshops because they were either off-island or their business was too small for them to spend a day attending a class. In order to address this, some similar chambers of commerce provide their workshops both in person, but also through a webinar format where participants may join in and watch the class using video conferencing software such as Skype or Google Hangout. This then allows more business owners to participate in the workshop, while the workshop host is able to earn more money.

#### **4.5 Business After Hours**

The Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce also works diligently to foster a positive business community by promoting member and nonmember networking. As part of this goal, the NICC has consistently put on so-called Business After Hours events. At these events, local business owners visit a business that is a member of the chamber in an effort to network and discuss other local business activities. This networking allows businesses the opportunity to not only talk about their strategies and upcoming plans, but to hand out business cards and gain new customers, new acquaintances and new ideas for improvement. These events, according to the data collected, are some of the most popular amongst members. Out of the 66 responses from a survey of the members of the NICC, networking events, which included the Business After Hours, were the most valuable resources. These events had with 4.5% the least amount of “not applicable” responses, achieved the most frequent score of ‘5’ with 31.8%, and scored the

highest average overall rating overall of 3.8 out of 5. This data, collected from our survey question asking “How valuable do you find networking events?” is summarized in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: Member Survey Networking Events Ranking (n=66)**

Although the Business After Hours can be considered a successful event, there is room for improvement. Some interviewees felt that the same people are always in attendance at these events, and therefore they gain no new connections by attending. Other members felt that they are not the target audience for the Business After Hours, many claiming that they are either too old or too young for the event when compared to those typically in attendance.

### 4.6 NICC Website

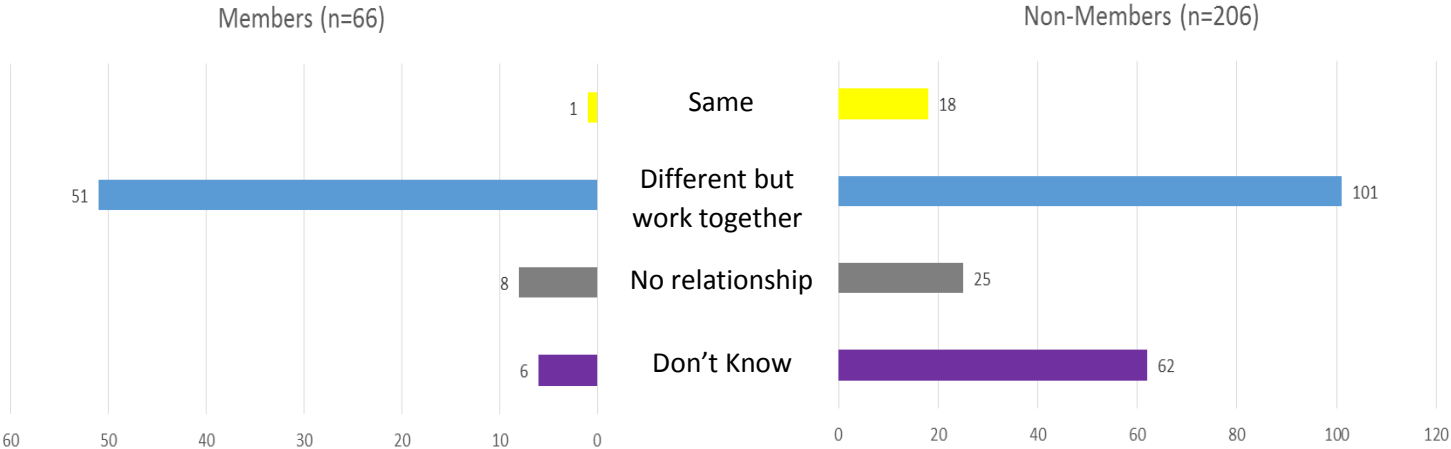
As previously mentioned, one key to becoming a successful business is to have a visually appealing website. The Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce had its website redesigned in 2014, and currently 9 out of 9 businesses interviewed and 3 out of 3 Chamber staff feel that this website is not as functional or attractive as it could be.

Currently, the NICC website features a black background with the chamber logo at the top of each page. The black background of the website is of concern to some members while others are unable to read clearly with the lack of contrast between the background and the headings which

are red, green or light gray. Members also feel that the website is not functional and due to this, they avoid using it. Additionally, the Chamber’s website has locations for members to post events and coupons, however, these areas are fairly empty because members simply are not using them.

**4.7 Visitor Services Center**

Throughout the surveys of both members and non-members there was much confusion concerning the relationship between the Visitor Services Center (VSC) and the NICC. While the VSC is a member of the NICC, the VSC receives governmental funding and hosts differing events from the Chamber. There have been talks of the two organizations merging because they serve a similar function in the community, however, currently both organizations are pleased to remain separate, according to interviews with people from both parties. As seen in Figure 10, when asked what the relationship between the two organizations is, both members and nonmembers were unclear.



**Figure 10: Perceived Relationship Between the NICC and VSC (n=66 members, n=206 non-members)**

Similarly to other questions, members did know more than nonmembers, although there was still confusion among both groups. While the vast majority realized they were separate entities that work together, there were both members and nonmembers who praised one organization for the services offered by the other.



## **4.8 Other Issues of Concern**

Through the interview process, several business owners and managers expressed concerns about other topics including the seasonal worker pool, housing and energy. Although the Chamber is not directly capable of solving these issues, it might have a role in helping businesses to address these issues by conducting workshops, facilitating discussion and disseminating information.

Additionally, the NICC can help to coordinate efforts between business owners, the Town Administration, non-profits and philanthropic organizations to help and address these concerns.

### **4.8.1 Worker Pool**

Another issue limiting business on Nantucket is the pool of seasonal workers from which businesses recruit. While Nantucket used to rely heavily on American college students as seasonal workers, these students are now less likely to spend their summers performing minimum wage jobs and more likely working at internships. Due to this, many businesses on the island, including 2 out of 17 interviewees, have begun looking at foreign workers including Hispanic and Eastern European college-aged people to work during the summer. Although these workers frequently travel to vacation destinations to work summers with work visas, they may struggle to speak English which limits their ability to effectively communicate in service-centric businesses such as restaurants and hotels. These limitations often make employers hesitant to hire foreign workers. However, as supported by our interviews, it is necessary to bring on seasonal help to seize the profits of a busy tourist season.

### **4.8.2 Housing Need**

The housing crisis on Nantucket greatly impacts the operation of businesses on the island, according to 15 out of 16 interviewees asked about the topic. Nantucket faces a severe lack of housing which limits workers ability to find housing, as demonstrated by a 2015 study conducted on behalf of Housing Nantucket (RKG, 2015). Many employers are unable to provide housing for their employees. This especially affects small businesses which cannot afford to house seasonal workers, but need them to maintain and grow their business on the island. The lack of

housing also inhibits businesses from hiring the best possible employee for the job, simply because that employee cannot find housing. Three out of 16 interviewed businesses explained that they had to let talented employees go because they did not have employee housing and the business could not afford to pay enough to enable them to live on island. According to 2 out of 16 interviews, these businesses' workers have even resorted to living in Hyannis and paying for their ferry commute each day because that is the cheapest solution to maintain work on Nantucket. Fifteen out of 16 interviews and 4 commentators out of 66 survey participants agreed that the issue of housing will require a multi-faceted approach, and in order to reach a solution the Chamber should not necessarily join the debate but instead should help to facilitate discussion and education on housing options.

The type of housing aid provided by the businesses interviewed has fallen primarily into one of two categories. Of the businesses spoken to, 6 out of 16 offer actual housing for their employees to live in. The one differing business provides a stipend to allow employees to better afford housing they would be unable to afford otherwise. Of those asked, business owners unanimously felt that having an actual house provided would be preferable to an increase in pay. The most common reason cited for this was that by simply increasing the pay or providing a stipend, the supply does not change and thus the same competition will still exist. Many believe that by only providing a stipend, rental costs will simply increase and the problem will remain.

Inquiring about the type of housing that needs to be provided resulted in a wide range of responses. More specifically, both dormitory and apartment style housing options were desired according to the 16 interviewees who spoke about housing. In dormitory style housing many employees share bedrooms and living spaces. In apartment style housing there are fewer people per room and less shared space. Neither option is a perfect solution for all businesses. Instead some business owners preferred one while others preferred the other. All businesses, however, realize that some form of sacrifice, be it financially or to the quaint nature of Nantucket must be made in order to construct more housing.

Another solution commonly proposed by interviewed businesses was that a group which functions similarly to Nantucket's Land Bank help to keep prices low. Nantucket's Land Bank

functions as a conservation program which purchases property as it becomes available and maintains it as public land (Nantucket Land Bank, 2015). The housing organization would function by purchasing apartments as they become available to prevent outside parties from buying them and renovating them for a profit. By eliminating this middleman who will be increasing the price to make a profit, the nonprofit housing bank would be able to keep prices as low as possible for renters. While no one interviewed was aware of its existence, this program does exist and was put into place on November 10, 2015 by the Land Bank itself (Nantucket Land Bank, 2015). In addition to its current practices, the Land Bank has begun to work towards allowing property to be used for housing purposes.

### **4.8.3 Energy**

Another common concern that emerged in our interviews was that of energy. 6 out of 6 interviewees asked stated that energy and sustainability were concerns to their business and to the island as a whole. Those asked were aware to varying degrees about energy and many were already taking steps to improve. These include seeking additional information and resources. Despite this, energy use on Nantucket has been steadily rising in recent years. In a recent study, “National Grid, the island’s sole electric utility, has determined that Nantucket’s demand for electricity is growing more than five times the Massachusetts state average” (Nantucket Energy Office n.d.). Due to this there is a need for even more awareness on the island about this issue.

## **5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this section we provide recommendations to the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce for possible steps they could take to help further the satisfaction of members, stakeholders and prospective members. We took into account the Chamber's budget, staff, and lobbying power when making these recommendations.

### **5.1 Member Events**

Though our research it was discovered that overall, the NICC members were very satisfied with the current variety and amount of services offered. However, there were some services which were frequently mentioned as those which could be updated to better fit the needs of certain members and changing trends in technology.

#### **5.1.1 Workshops**

Although the NICC currently offers a diverse workshop program, we recommend that the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce begin offering new workshop topics including social media skills, small business strategies and employee relations. These workshops will help business owners to remain current on advancing technology and will also allow business owners an opportunity to learn from other business owners' successes and mistakes. This process will facilitate connections in the business community while also allowing employers to remain up to date on current initiatives, technologies and strategies. Additionally, we recommend that the NICC offer workshops on both housing and sustainability. These two topics have been growing in popularity and although the NICC should not necessarily take a stance on the issue, they should facilitate discussion between business owners and also provide educational resources to the public.

#### **5.1.2 Webinars**

Due to the many business owners who travel off island in the shoulder season, it is recommended that the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce allow members to join classes, workshops and seminars via an online video technology. If these workshops present a fee, members can pay this fee through either PayPal or Venmo, two free and secure online payment technologies. This

service will also benefit smaller businesses which simply do not have the staff to have someone leave the business for a day to attend a workshop.

### **5.1.3 Business After Hours**

To make these events even more successful, it is recommended to host a few more specific Business After Hours events, in addition to the traditional events which occur regularly. These more specific Business After Hours may target young business owners, long standing businesses, women's businesses, or specific categories of business such as dining. It is recommended that the NICC's Membership Committee look into hosting a Business After Hours event for just new members and their mentors. This will foster a sense of camaraderie between new Chamber members and also will help the new members to feel more comfortable to attend other Business After Hours events.

In conjunction with this plan, it is also recommended that the NICC attempt to involve more non-member business owners in these events. By inviting more non-members, the networking structure at each Business After Hours will change, allowing members a greater networking opportunity. This will also allow non-members to meet current chamber members and to hear about their experiences, providing a potential recruitment opportunity for the NICC.

## **5.2 Website**

As our research has shown, the NICC website is perceived by members and the NICC staff as visually unattractive and unclear in its content. The NICC is partway through a multi-year contract with the current website designer, however, it has already begun looking into new options for the future. To improve the website, we recommend that the NICC redesign the website to make it more user-friendly and improve its overall functionality. A local web or graphic designer could also assist to make it more visually appealing and generally more "Nantucket". To do this, we recommend the NICC website remove its black background, add more photographs and maintain an easier list of tabs to navigate. It would also be beneficial to make the new website more mobile-friendly, as currently the website is difficult to navigate on a mobile device. Additionally, we recommend that the NICC staff receive training on how to use

and properly navigate the new website so they may better assist those with questions.

### **5.3 Educational Programming**

Through our research, concerns about housing and sustainability continued to arise. To address this, we recommend that the NICC take steps to better educate members and the public on these topics. As part of this educational process, the NICC should host a workshop produced by National Grid to help members and the public to better understand not only how reducing energy consumption can benefit the environment but also how reducing energy consumption can save businesses money. The NICC should also host both workshops and forums on housing. By facilitating discussion in addition to providing education, employers can discuss successful strategies to combat the housing problem and receive advice from others who face the same challenges.

### **5.4 Future Work**

We recommend that if this project is to be continued, future researchers focus primarily on the NICC website. Future researchers should identify the main areas of concern on the website and then study the ease of use of the website on different web browsers and devices. This can be done by tracking the amount of time it takes a sample of people to reach certain areas of the website. These times can then be used to suggest specific areas of the website which should be made clearer or easier to find. Similar trials can be run to analyze content, by asking a sample of people to identify when a certain event, for example, is being held and tracking the time for them to browse the website and respond.

Additionally, future researchers are recommended to set up a trial sustainability workshop with National Grid. After the workshop, participants should be surveyed to determine what they liked, did not like and would want to see in the future. Future workshops should then be planned and adjusted accordingly. Trial runs of housing forums and specifically targeted Business After Hours events should also be conducted and analyzed for attendance and overall satisfaction rating.

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## Appendix A: List of Chambers in the Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

Chamber	Location	Chamber	Location	Chamber	Location
Amherst Area	Amherst	Greater Holyoke	Holyoke	Revere	Revere
United Regional	Attleboro	Assabet Valley	Hudson	Rockport	Rockport
Bedford	Bedford	Hull Nantasket Beach	Hull	Salem	Salem
Beverly	Beverly	Hyannis Area	Hyannis	Salisbury	Salisbury
Greater Boston	Boston	Merrimack Valley	Lawrence	Sandwich	Sandwich
Metro South	Brockton	Lee	Lee	Scituate	Scituate
Brookline	Brookline	Lenox	Lenox	Professional Women's Chamber of Western Massachusetts	Springfield
Cape Cod Canal Region	Buzzards Bay	Lexington	Lexington	East of the River	Springfield
Cambridge	Cambridge	Greater Lowell	Lowell	Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield	Springfield
Cape Cod	Centerville	Lynn Area	Lynn	Stockbridge	Stockbridge
Chatham	Chatham	Malden	Malden	Stoughton	Stoughton
Chicopee	Chicopee	Tri-Town	Mansfield	The Chamber of Central Mass South	Sturbridge
Wachusett	Clinton	Marblehead	Marblehead	Sudbury	Sudbury
Cohasset	Cohasset	Marlborough Regional	Marlborough	Taunton Area	Taunton
Concord	Concord	Mashpee	Mashpee	Martha's Vineyard	Vineyard Haven
Northshore	Danvers	Cranberry Country	Middleborough	Walpole	Walpole
Nashoba Valley	Devens	Milford Area	Milford	Waltham West Suburban	Waltham
Eastham	Eastham	Nantucket Island	Nantucket	Watertown-Belmont	Watertown
Greater Easthampton	Easthampton	New Bedford Area	New Bedford	Wellfleet	Wellfleet
Easton	Easton	Greater Newburyport	Newburyport	Corridor Nine Area	Westborough
Everett	Everett	Newton-Needham	Newton	Greater Westfield	Westfield
Fall River Area	Fall River	Greater Northampton	Northampton	Dennis	West Dennis
Falmouth	Falmouth	Neponset Valley	Norwood	Yarmouth Area	West Yarmouth
North Central Massachusetts	Fitchburg	Orleans	Orleans	Blackstone Valley	Whitinsville
MetroWest	Framingham	Quaboag Hills	Palmer	Williamstown	Williamstown
Cape Ann	Gloucester	Peabody Area	Peabody	Winthrop	Winthrop
Southern Berkshire	Great Barrington	Berkshire	Pittsfield	Wilmington	Wilmington
Franklin County	Greenfield	Plymouth Area	Plymouth	North Suburban	Woburn
Harwich	Harwich	Provincetown	Provincetown	Webster, Dudley, Oxford	Worcester
Greater Haverhill	Haverhill	South Shore	Quincy	Worcester Regional	Worcester
Holden	Holden	Reading-North Reading	Reading		

## Appendix B: Interview Script

### Interview Script

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is \_\_\_\_\_ (introduce scribe) and we are members of a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Worcester MA. We are working on a project with the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce in order to assess how well they are meeting their member needs and stakeholder expectations. We are interviewing you today because we have determined that your opinion on this matter would be beneficial to our research. This interview is expected to take no more than twenty minutes.

Before we begin I would like to inform you of your rights during the interview. You may choose to skip any question asked without reason. You may take a break at any point during the interview. If we directly quote you, you have the right to review everything quoted before the final report is published. You may also remain anonymous, meaning that any utilized quotes will not reveal your identity, if you so choose. Do you have any questions before we begin?

#### Questions

- 1). When did \_\_\_\_\_ [the business] begin?
- 2). How long have you held your current position?
- 3). Why did you choose to start a business on Nantucket?
- 4). How many employees (full time/seasonal) do you have?
- 5). What have been some of the challenges of doing business on Nantucket?
- 6). What special challenges do you face as a business on Nantucket when compared to businesses in other locations?

If housing is mentioned, ask for elaboration and transition into housing questions.

- 7). Does your business provide housing assistance (i.e. dorms, stipend for housing, increased pay) for year round or seasonal employees?
- 8). If no, what type of housing would these employees find most useful?
- 9). What can Nantucket or the NICC do to help you better meet employee housing needs?

10). Have you ever been affiliated with the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC), either as a member or as an employee?

If yes...

11). Does the NICC help you deal with the challenges mentioned above? How? Why/ why not?

12). Do you think that the NICC membership fee represents a good value? Why/ why not?

13). Are there any other services, workshops or events that you would like to see the NICC offer in the future?

14). What more could the Chamber do to help you and your business?

If no...

15). Were you ever a member of the NICC? If so, why did you leave?

16). What is the primary role of the NICC in the community? Is it meeting this role's needs?

17). How is the Chamber perceived in the community?

18). Are you a member of any other collective business organizations such as Petticoat Row or Nantucket Blackbook? If so, how do these services benefit your business?

19). Is there anyone else that you would recommend we interview?

## Appendix C: Member Survey

### NICC Member Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey! Your responses will be used to determine how well the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce (NICC) is meeting its member's needs.

Question 1: Which category best represents your business?

- Accommodations
- Merchants
- Activities
- Real Estate
- Arts & Culture
- Services & Transportation
- Food & Dining
- Weddings & Functions

Question 2: How many year-round employees does your business have on island? \_\_\_\_\_

Question 3: Which of the following events does the NICC sponsor? Check all that apply.

- Holiday Tree Lighting
- Fourth of July Fireworks
- Boston Pops Concert
- Nantucket Triathlon
- Nantucket Garden Festival
- Home for the Holidays
- Red Ticket Drawing
- Nantucket New Years
- Cranberry Festival
- Fourth of July Downtown Activities
- Daffodil Weekend
- Stroll Weekend

Question 4: Is the NICC a local government entity?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Question 5: What percentage of Nantucket businesses are members of the Nantucket Chamber?

- $\leq 25\%$
- $> 25\%$  and  $\leq 50\%$
- $> 50\%$  and  $\leq 75\%$
- $> 75\%$

Question 6: How are the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce and Nantucket Visitor Services related?

- Same organization
- No relationship
- Different organizations that work together
- Don't know

Question 7: Do you think the NICC membership fee represents a good value for your business?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Question 8: Which of the following services do you think the NICC offers?

- Member networking events   
  Advertisement in the Annual guide book   
  Digital advertising in NYC  
 Member workshops   
  Notarization   
  Advocacy in the State House  
 The Red Ticket Program

Question 9: Would you like to see more member workshops sponsored by the NICC?

- Yes   
  No

Question 10: How many member workshops does the NICC host annually?

- 0   
  1-2   
  3-4   
  5-6   
  6+

Question 11: What types of workshops do you find most beneficial for your business?

- Starting a business   
  Small business strategies   
  Employee management  
 Tax info sessions   
  How to use the Chamber website   
  Small business management  
 Social media skills   
  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Question 12: Please indicate how valuable you find the following. Mark only one oval per row.

	1 Least Valuable	2	3	4	5 Most Valuable	Not Applicable
Member Workshops						
Networking Events						
Guidebook Advertisements						
The NICC Website						
Off-island Advertising						
SCORE Consultations						

Question 13: Do you have any suggestions for other services that the NICC could provide? Such as programs, events, activities, workshops, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Question 14: Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Question 15: If you would like to be entered into the raffle, please enter your email address below. Your email address will not be used to identify you in the analysis of data or in any reporting of results.  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D: Public Survey

### Public Survey

Hello. We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. We are researching the public's knowledge and view of the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce. Do you have 3 minutes to take our survey?

Question 1: Please select which of the following options best applies to you.

- Seasonal resident       Year-round resident       Tourist       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Question 2: Which of the following events does the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce sponsor?  
Please check all that apply.

- Holiday Tree Lighting       Fourth of July Fireworks       Boston Pops Concert  
 Nantucket Triathlon       Nantucket Garden Festival       Home for the Holidays  
 Red Ticket Drawing       Nantucket New Years       Cranberry Festival  
 Fourth of July Downtown Activities       Daffodil Weekend       Stroll Weekend

Question 3: Is the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce a local government entity?

- Yes       No       Don't know

Question 4: Please name a business or organization that is a member of the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce, or check don't know. \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

Question 5: What percentage of Nantucket businesses are members of the Nantucket Chamber?

- ≤ 25%       > 25% and ≤ 50%       > 50% and ≤ 75%       > 75%

Question 6: How are the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce and Nantucket Visitor Services related?

- Same organization       No relationship  
 Different organizations that work together       Don't know

Question 7: Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree that the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce has a positive impact in the Nantucket community.

- Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree  
1      2      3      4      5       Cannot say

Do you have any additional comments? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_