

## Business Benchmarks: Making Minnesota ready

By Doug Loon

The Minnesota Chamber works every day to help Minnesota businesses – large and small, all types and sizes – change, compete and grow. Our job is to make sure that Minnesota is ready for our next opportunities.

Policymakers and business leaders together are challenged to chart a path to maintain a vibrant economy. Minnesota must be ready for the future - ready for change and ready to grow. To do so, everyone must be on the same page with an objective measurement of where Minnesota businesses stand among the pressures of an interconnected global marketplace.

To that end, the Minnesota Chamber and our local Chamber Federation network is pleased to present our inaugural Minnesota Business Benchmarks - <http://mnbiz.cc/1R2iiYW>. These key economic indicators size up our business climate from a business perspective – providing comprehensive and impartial data on Minnesota’s economic competitiveness. The benchmarks are collected from sources such as state and federal government data. We will update these measures annually and use them to advocate for both private-sector and public-sector solutions.

Among the key takeaways in our report:

- Minnesota’s quality of life and talented workforce is the envy of many.
- There are mixed results for Minnesota’s overall business and economic climate.
- Too many indicators show Minnesota’s cost of doing business as not competitive.
- Minnesota is improving in key infrastructure areas of transportation and educational attainment, with more work to do.

We must work collectively to build on the state’s strengths and minimize its weaknesses. We must identify those statewide actions that make Minnesota ready for economic change, opportunity and growth.

A great deal of our attention will be on state government. What occurs inside the Capitol hallways in St. Paul matters greatly to our economic prosperity, because Gov. Mark Dayton and the Legislature can – and do – make strategic decisions that affect the ability of individuals to start, run and grow a business.

It’s noteworthy that our first Business Benchmarks provides an excellent springboard for the Minnesota Chamber’s top priorities at this year’s Legislature.

By cautiously using the surplus, we can invest in our economic and physical infrastructure by passing both strategic business tax relief and sustained investment in roads, bridges and transit.

We must pursue initiatives in the public and private sectors to better synchronize workforce skills with the needs of the changing economy. Access to a strong broadband network and providing investment tools for workforce housing development will help all regions of the state to grow.

We will engage on important topics like workplace regulations. We urge policymakers not to enact one-size-fits-all mandates that can reduce flexibility for employers and employees alike. Let’s instead look to a private-sector solution that illuminates best practices and set clear goals for putting them to use in

our workplaces. In addition, we'll work with the State Council on Disability and Human Rights Commission to make sure small and mid-sized businesses have the time needed to comply with accessibility laws and avoid expensive lawsuits that can end up shutting these employers down.

The Minnesota Chamber welcomes a robust discussion on identifying the public policies and delivering solutions to ensure that Minnesota is ready for change and ready to grow. That benefits all Minnesotans.

**Doug Loon is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce – [www.mnchamber.com](http://www.mnchamber.com).**