

FORT SCOTT AREA

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & TOURISM CENTER

Interesting Chamber of Commerce Facts. What is a Chamber of Commerce?

A **chamber of commerce** (also referred to in some circles as a **board of trade**) is a form of [business network](#), e.g., a local organization of businesses whose goal is to further the interests of businesses. Business owners in towns and cities form these local societies to advocate on behalf of the business community. Local businesses are members, and they elect a board of directors or executive council to set policy for the chamber. The board or council then hires a President, CEO or Executive Director, plus staffing appropriate to size, to run the organization.

The first chamber of commerce was founded in 1599 in [Marseille, France](#). It would be followed 65 years later by another official chamber of commerce, probably in [Brugge](#), then part of the [Spanish Netherlands](#).

The world's oldest English-speaking chamber of commerce is that of [New York City](#), which was established in 1768. The oldest known existing chamber in the English-speaking world with continuous records is the [Glasgow](#) Chamber of Commerce, which was founded in 1783. However, Leeds Chamber of Commerce is the UK's oldest, followed by [Belfast](#), [Northern Ireland](#).

A chamber of commerce is not a governmental body or institution, and has no direct role in the writing and passage of laws and regulations that affect businesses. It may however, act as a [lobby](#) in an attempt to get laws passed that are favorable to businesses.

Membership in an individual chamber in an area can range from a few dozen to well over 300,000 (as is the case with the [Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)). Some chamber organizations in China report even larger membership numbers. Chambers of commerce can range in scope from individual neighborhoods within a city or town up to an international chamber of commerce.

In the United States, chambers do not operate in the same manner as the [Better Business Bureau](#) in that, while the BBB has the authority to bind its members under a formal operations doctrine (and, thus, can remove them if complaints arise regarding their services), the local chamber membership is either voluntary or required by law. In addition, Chambers represent the interests of businesses, while the BBB represents both the interests of businesses and the general public. Chambers of commerce also can include [economic development](#) corporations or groups (though the latter can sometimes be a formal branch of a local government, the groups work together and may in some cases share office facilities) as well as tourism and visitors bureaus.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Some chambers have joined state, national, and even international bodies (such as [Eurochambres](#), the [International Chamber of Commerce](#) (ICC), Worldchambers or the American Chamber of Commerce Executives). Currently, there are about 13,000 chambers registered in the official Worldchambers Network registry, and the chamber of commerce network is the largest business network globally. This network is informal, with each local chamber incorporated and operating separately, rather than as a chapter of a national or state chamber

Local and regional chambers

Chambers of commerce in the US can be considered local, regional, state, or nationwide ([US Chamber of Commerce](#)). Local Chambers work on the local level to bring the business community together to develop strong local networks, which can result in a business-to-business exchange. In most cases, local Chambers work with their local government, such as their mayor, their city council and local representatives to develop pro-business initiatives.

Local chambers of commerce have existed since 1825 in the United States: the first chamber in [Boston](#) was inspired by senator [Daniel Webster](#). In 2005 there were 2,800 chambers of commerce in the United States and 102 chambers representing U.S. businesses overseas.