

# PROSPER TOGETHER

AN INITIATIVE OF TWINWEST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## 2018 Progress Report

### **Background:**

Throughout 2017, the leadership at TwinWest met with the members, non-members, community and business leaders, and they told us about critical issues that were affecting them and the region. In addition, they gave us ideas as to how the chamber could help to provide solutions. Based upon that feedback as well as best practices throughout the country, in November 2017, the TwinWest Chamber launched Prosper Together the dynamic, innovative strategic plan that would revolutionize the TwinWest Chamber. The plan includes a new mission statement, new business model, new focus on partnerships, new cornerstones, and new outcomes/impacts, all while building on the critical foundation of TwinWest.

### **Mission:**

The new mission statement for the organization was vetted with members and stakeholders throughout the metro region. The mission of the TwinWest Chamber is: ***“We exist to champion growth and prosperity through catalytic leadership and dynamic partnerships.”***

We accomplish this mission by ***inspiring communities, investing in people, and promoting and protecting business.***

### **Business Model:**

Chambers across the country, including TwinWest, have realized that for the chamber to thrive, the business model must evolve. We realize that in partnering with the community, we can better serve our members. We realize that our funding model must also evolve and include ways partners can invest in the work we are doing above and beyond membership dues. Our new business model now includes:

- Membership for those that believe in being a member and want a direct impact
- Initiative funding, Prosper Together, for those that want to invest in the greater good of the organization and want to fund the four cornerstones of the strategic plan
- Public-Private Partnerships for those public-sector entities that contract with the chamber for specific deliverables
- Foundation and public-sector grant funding that is available to support the work the TwinWest Foundation is doing in talent, workforce and education.

## Partnerships:

Since the launch of the plan, the team has been actively working on building new relationships and forming new partnerships. We know that partnerships are critical for our success to increase impact and outcomes, leverage relationships and resources, and increase overall engagement in our plan. Here are a just a few examples of those new partnerships:

- School Districts – we now have public-private partnerships with 6 school districts. Including Hopkins, Minnetonka, Osseo, St. Louis Park and Wayzata as well as Lions Gate Academy. These partners are investing significant dollars into our programs aimed at better connecting business, educators and students.
- Municipalities – we are continuing to form public-private partnerships with our local municipalities. We are currently entertaining a formalized pilot partnership with 3 of our cities including Brooklyn Center, Maple Grove and St. Louis Park. These partnerships will focus on improving our existing industry outreach plan, strengthening our relationships with the business community and addressing the talent needs of our businesses and communities.
- Other Chambers – we are working more collaboratively than ever with other chambers to better drive more significant impact and outcomes for our stakeholders, streamline our work, find efficiencies and strengthen the overall reach of the chamber.
- Metro and Statewide Organizations – we continue to enhance current partnerships and forge new partnerships with organizations that have a similar mission of strengthening the regional economy. Some of these organizations include: Greater MSP, Minnesota Business Partnership, MN Chamber, Medical Alley, MPMA, MSP Win, and numerous others.

The work that we are doing with our partners is innovative and is producing significant results. Here is just one example: TwinWest received the statewide **Outstanding Partner of the Year** award from the **Minnesota Association for Career & Technical Administrators** in recognition of our “outstanding contribution to educating Minnesota youth.”

### ***Partner Testimonials:***

“It is a great pleasure to work with the Twin West team, especially Andrea Ferstan for her professionalism and her detail in task accomplishment. I am glad that they are being recognized by MACTA because “what gets recognized gets reinforced, and what gets reinforced gets repeated.”

- *Godfrey Edaferierhi, College and Career Coordinator, Osseo Area Schools*

“In conjunction with our TwinWest partnership, Brent (TwinWest team member) has been invaluable in helping us make connections with local businesses and services that we may not otherwise have access to. Last week Metro Transit came to our school for an excellent, engaging presentation. This week we will be going to our local Target for a rotation introducing various jobs available to our students. Each experience has been personally tailored for us based on input from our teachers as to our desired outcomes and connections to current class content. The Business and Special Education Transitions departments at Lionsgate Academy are so grateful for Brent's effort, organization and communication that makes these and other future opportunities available to us and our students. Thank you, Brent and TwinWest, for your excellence and commitment to providing high quality experiences for students in the Twin Cities.” - *Kristi Person, Business Education, Lionsgate Academy*

## Cornerstones and Outcomes:

Our work is focused on four cornerstones: talent and workforce, advocacy and public policy, entrepreneurship and small business, and existing industry economic development.



The #1 issue facing our businesses today is the ability to attract, retain and develop talent. We are facing major talent challenges: including an estimated shortage of 62,000 workers by 2020. The chamber realizes the only way to address this issue is by proactive, collaborative programming. Based upon the current asset map, we have identified that the area in which we can have the greatest impact is our K-12 pipeline.

We have made significant progress quickly with our K-12 partners and businesses. We are positively addressing this challenge for our business community and the region through a few innovative programs:

**Opportunity Connect** ([overview video, click here](#)) - This impactful program provides solution-based strategies to the talent shortage. Opportunity Connect uses a new innovative technology platform to seamlessly connect and support business, education, and students/families with career connected learning experiences that foster student engagement, early career exploration, and postsecondary and career readiness. Here is the progress to date:

- On track to exceed our 1<sup>st</sup> year goal of impacting **2500 students** with career connected learning experience in year one.
- **30 teachers** across **4 school districts** and **1 charter school** have engaged to provide career connected experiences, such as site visits, guest instruction and internships to youth.
- Over **200 lessons** have been built out on the site that enable business professionals, as guest instructors, to bring learning to life with real life connections.
- Since September of 2018, approximately **20 community professionals** have set up profiles on Opportunity Connect and **15 companies**
- Some of the companies that are engaged in providing experiences year one are: **Metropolitan Council, Cargill, Target, SKOL Marketing, I See Me!, Sandler Training, Lake State Kombucha, Tria, Tunheim and Associates, Bonfe Heating and Plumbing, Emerson Automation, Optum, Engage Star, Interscapes Inc.**

Testimonial: After a Target site visit with Lionsgate Academy students (who are on the autism spectrum), Jenny Moe with Target Corporate said, “**we need to replicate this experience around the nation**”; a student was similarly inspired, asking if they could start work on Monday.

Please click to learn more about the [impact of career connected learning](#) from students and parents.



**Teacher Externships:** A new week-long immersion program, that occurred in August, where teachers were entrenched in different businesses throughout the region to broaden their awareness of business and industries and to impact their teaching strategies.

- **14 teachers** completed teacher externships in IT, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Engineering.

Testimonials: Teachers and business professionals alike were thrilled with the program's outcome. Teacher, Gary, from Osseo School District, stated **"Every teacher needs to do this"** supported by Jeri, from Wayzata School District, **"Extremely valuable experience! Thank you!"**

The businesses were equally invested in continuing to build relationships with local teachers and enjoyed the experience. **"Don't stop. Keep pushing this program. There is so much work to be done. Help kids find something they like, and they can find a company they love."**

**Talent Symposium:** TwinWest organized and led a collaborative metro-wide event with **10 local and regional chambers of commerce** and numerous other partners including: **Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota State University, Minnesota Business Partnership, Minnesota Precision Manufacturer's Association, Minnesota Workforce Council Association, MSPWin and Center of The American Experiment.**

- Over **300 attendees** from public, private and nonprofit sectors
- Thought leaders throughout the metro region speaking on the talent crisis and solutions for our businesses, schools and communities
- 1<sup>st</sup> ever **gubernatorial debate** focused on talent

**The Advocacy  
Edge**

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TwinWest works on behalf of business every day to ensure that the business environment is the very best it can be in our region. We've engaged with legislators at the federal, state, and local levels of government to be your voice on issues that impact your business. Issues like taxes, burdensome regulations, transportation and infrastructure,

trade, talent, health care, and government-imposed mandates on the private sector workplace.

- **Lawsuit – Sick and Safe Leave** - Beginning in late 2017 and throughout all of 2018, we joined with other members of the business community as co-plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the City of Minneapolis on their sick and safe time ordinance. The City of Minneapolis sought to impose the ordinance on all businesses located inside and outside of the City of Minneapolis, if, in fact they performed any business within the City limits. The courts ruled that the City of Minneapolis may NOT impose its ordinance on businesses resident outside the city limits. This is a significant win for our members whose businesses are in the TwinWest footprint, but have clients and customers located in Minneapolis, or have employees that travel through the city of Minneapolis for work.
- **Legislator and Business Interactions**
  - Group lobbying activities: **Business Day at the Capitol, Session Priorities Dinner, and Washington D.C. Fly-In.**
  - Over **30 meetings** with legislators and staff during the 2018 legislative session.
  - We hosted **10 Legislative Breakfasts** with an average attendance of **90 business representatives and 6 legislators** at each breakfast to discuss issues critical to our business community.
- **Debates** – This was a critical election year and TwinWest led several initiatives to provide the business community access to the candidates. We hosted or co-hosted debates for candidates in the following races: **Congressional Districts 3 & 5; two Gubernatorial debates, two U.S. Senate debates, and an Attorney General debate.**
- **T-21** - We actively lobbied local elected officials in the cities of **Plymouth, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park** on additional restrictions for businesses located within those cities on the sale of tobacco products.
- **Political Action Committee** – Although your membership and Prosper Together investment does not directly support the PAC, the TwinWest PAC endorsed 11 candidates for 1 federal, 8 state, 1 county and 1 local offices. The PAC is supported by separate individual and corporate investors that believe in supporting candidates at the local, state and national level that understand and support good business policy.

## The Center For Business Excellence

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Small business and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our regional economy. The majority of TwinWest members are small businesses and we understand the need for each of them to grow and prosper. We also learned that it is critical for the chamber to streamline its programming to increase our effectiveness.

- **Executive Sounding Board (ESB)** – This new program was piloted with 10 business owners of all sizes and types as a trusted advisor group/peer network. The owners/CEOs are placed into groups of 8-12 and utilized the 3-hour session per month to better their overall business, identify, discuss and solve problems, and garner best practice advice from other business owners. The goal for 2019 is to expand this to 3 ESBs to further increase impact and outcomes as well as boost engagement in the chamber.

- **Leadership Series** – This monthly program is a staple for the organization and the members. During each luncheon, a prominent, successful CEO shares their leadership and business insights as a featured keynote. On average 75 business professionals engage on a monthly basis.
- **Purposeful Networking** – We will continue to provide networking opportunities, but we will focus them more on community impact. We will be partnering with some of our existing non-profits to conduct networking events while fulfilling their mission. For example, we will be doing a normal business showcase while packing boxes of food – creating business while doing good.
- **Segmented/Targeted Networking** – Specialized groups have been formed based upon feedback from members regarding a desire to increase engagement. These groups meet quarterly and have these designations – women, men and young professionals.
- **Member Recognition** – Business showcases, ribbon cuttings and social events will continue to be supported by membership investment.



One of the partnerships we have been focused on is our public-private partnerships with the municipalities. It is essential for us to work together as a region on issues like existing industry awareness, relationship building, outreach as well as community initiative events that will stimulate the economy and allow for growth. This new approach to public-private partnerships set TwinWest apart from other chambers in the region.

- **Business Retention & Expansion** – This new partnership will occur with 2 pilot cities in 2019. The City of Brooklyn Center and the City of St. Louis Park will partner with us to expand our business retention and expansion program. Together we will create a plan that increases our outreach visits to companies in these two cities. The chamber will coordinate a team approach to BRE and will include partners from the city, post-secondary, utilities, etc. We will visit with business leaders to better understand their challenges, collect data, address concerns and provide resources to the business leaders. This data will inform our work as we continue to develop relevant solution-based programming and we will deliver the results to city leadership, other partners and chamber members.
- **Chamber Collaborations** – Collaboration building is essential for our success. We are engaged in ongoing discussions with other chambers regarding effectiveness, efficiencies, alliances and programming. Our goal is to leverage resources and relationships to further achieve our mission while being good stewards of our stakeholders' investments.

## Conclusion:

The TwinWest Chamber of Commerce is working hard for you, for our community, and for our region. We believe **passionately** in the work we are doing and have made significant progress in just one year to deliver on our new strategic plan. **We need you** to capitalize on that momentum! We welcome and encourage your **volunteerism** and your **financial investment**. Thanks for your past and future partnership. Together we're making a difference. Together we are prospering.

***Thank you for your investment and we look forward to partnering with you in the future.***