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### Worcester Chamber of Commerce: Recruiting Minority Business Owners

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#### Recommended Citation

DiMaria, Ryan; Hull, Alexander; Lu, Xikun; Wang, Haopeng; Hou, Jiacheng; and Zhao, Danning, "Worcester Chamber of Commerce: Recruiting Minority Business Owners" (2019). *School of Professional Studies*. 48. [https://commons.clarku.edu/sps\\_masters\\_papers/48](https://commons.clarku.edu/sps_masters_papers/48)

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**Capstone Project Report:**

**Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce**

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### **Acknowledgements**

First, we would like to thank Karen Pelletier, Vice President of Operations and Director of Education and Workforce Development at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, for providing us the opportunity to work on this project with her and the Chamber. Second, we would like to thank Richard Arion, our capstone advisor from Clark University, for all of his support, mentoring, and encouragement throughout this project. We would also like to thank Joseph O'Brien, Ivette Olmeda, and Robert Thomas for their help in connecting us with immigrant and minority business owners in Worcester. Lastly, we would like to thank all of the business owners, chamber staff members, and community members who were willing to share their experiences, thoughts, and opinions with us throughout this project.

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### **Executive Summary**

Our capstone project was to help the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce identify how to re-frame their marketing so it would be appealing to immigrant and minority owned businesses. Based on interviews and external research, our group was able to create a tangible and resourceful data set that provided justified recommendations and ideas on how the Chamber could make adjustments to their marketing plan to attract more businesses of this particular demographic in the city of Worcester. By implementing these recommendations, we believe the Chamber has the opportunity to create a more diverse group of Chamber members, add value to a previously underserved community, and support minority and immigrant owned small businesses through Worcester's growth in the coming years.

## Chapter One: Introduction

### History of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Since the Blackstone Canal connected Worcester to Providence and the sea in 1828, Worcester has experienced growth and development within the city. Driven by the power of innovation, a number of world-class companies have been established and developed rapidly in Worcester, including Washburn & Moen, once the world's largest wire manufacturer, and Crompton & Knowles, a global multicolor looms manufacturer. In addition, the headquarters of Polar Beverages, the largest independent soft drink company in the United States, is still based in Worcester. If you drive on Interstate 290, you can see their mascot Bear Orson who wears a lovely green suit. Throughout its history, Worcester's charm has attracted residents from other coasts. According to the *Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce: Business & Community Guide*, immigrants from Ireland, Italy and Sweden came in large numbers through the nineteenth century, and were later joined by families from Poland, French-speaking Canada, Armenia, Greece, Vietnam, and Puerto Rico. More recently, immigrant from Russia, Albania, Ghana and Liberia came over to Worcester. Newcomers continue to energize the city's small business base and own approximately 37 percent of the city's businesses.

Although the influx of immigrants brings new ideas, it also brings cultural conflicts. Religion and language have become obstacles to cooperation between companies. In this context, the establishment of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce undoubtedly helped business owners solve many problems. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit, member driven organization funded by membership dues, sponsorships, and program and event fees. It is aimed at the public interest of society and based on the autonomous behavior under the supervision of the government. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is

committed to uniting and supporting the development of business organizations in the region, because the growth of these organizations is essential to the future of Worcester. Finding new leads or working with the right people is not always the easiest task, but the Chamber offers a variety of social platforms and networking opportunities to their members. It hopes to attract more members to join through these collaborations and thus expand their organization size. The Chamber represents more than 2,300 members across several industries and of several sizes. The goal of the Chamber is to advocate for policies and legislation on important issues affecting business in the region (Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2019).

For example, the Chamber is currently helping Worcester to classify dual tax. Worcester's dual tax rate has caused companies to pay a disproportionate tax on their operations. The Chamber is committed to eliminating the difference in property tax rates in order to reduce the tax burden on people and thereby increase the number of businesses in the city. At the same time, the Chamber is still asking the Worcester City Council to pass the state's Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP). The program provides Gateway Cities with two tax incentives to develop market rate housing, thereby increasing the number of residential areas and expanding the diversity of housing stocks to support economic development and promote neighborhood stability.

The most significant benefit of joining a chamber of commerce is the sharing of resources. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce hosts more than ninety events each year to give members the opportunity to network and communicate with thousands of regional professionals. Today, some of the most valuable skills in business are interpersonal skills. Joining a chamber of commerce can expand a business owners' network. If a business owner can integrate into networking groups, it can be a shortcut to building a large network of contacts.



As a member, the Chamber also works with businesses to facilitate cooperation with and provide direct access to public agency representatives, financing programs, confidential site searches, individualized business development assistance. Doing business requires timely mastery of policy information, investment information, project information, sales information, price information, among other things. If the business owner can realize in advance the macroeconomic trends, policy changes, and risks, they can work to mitigate risk and maximize their investment. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce aims to provide members with the most updated, accessible information. In addition, they provide members with free training and advertising for their business. After becoming a member, the Chamber will print the company's name on the Chamber's official website and brochure, which can be accessed by thousands of people across the region. Members can also update company information in a timely manner so that visitors can accurately understand company functions. In terms of training, the Worcester Chamber of Commerce offers a series of seminars and regularly invites business professionals to give presentations (Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2019).

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce understands that the scope of its work does not allow all Massachusetts businesses to utilize its services. In order to be able to assist as many organizations as possible, the Chamber has established partnerships with many organizations which have the same functions (Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2019). For example, the Worcester Business Resource Alliance (WBRA) is committed to providing resources and other forms of assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurial communities in Massachusetts. The WBRA conducts targeted and competitive training for corporate members in central Massachusetts. Like the Chamber, it also shares business resources (Worcester Business Resource Alliance, 2019). Through cooperation with the Chamber, both

parties will receive more shared resources to help members improve their company value.

Worcester itself has grown to become, “an economic engine for Central Massachusetts and the Commonwealth, actively responding to growth and development changes to create an environment conducive to both business and residential activity” (The City of Worcester, 2019). Promoting its assets and expanding them to other regions is one of the main goals for the city of Worcester (The City of Worcester, 2019).

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### *Poor Communication*

The wide reach of the Chamber has created the excellent service quality of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce which represents the interests of more than five thousand companies and helps them build and define the future of Worcester. However, because of the large number of members it is difficult for each business to know each other and form cooperation without effective management system arrangement. After becoming a member, each company is in the same class. When there is no unified arrangement of activities by the Chamber of Commerce, the lack of communication has become a significant problem. This is reflected in the interview, even if the leaders of the two companies in the business have become partners, they do not know that the other is a member of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce. Communication is a fact of life, especially in the workplace, where teamwork, technology and remote work are increasingly common. In order to make the rapid development of enterprises, many businessmen choose to join the Chamber of Commerce to seek the possibility of cooperation. But when they found that the chamber of commerce could not meet their cooperation expectations, the lack of communication will occur. The service team did not complete the task, the members were not

notified of the meeting time, and the Chamber of Commerce staff did not seem to know what their role was. When the above situation arises, the member will have a negative impression on the Chamber of Commerce, which in turn will generate resistance.

#### *Lack of immigrant and minority owned business involvement*

Diversity is a feature of Worcester. Immigration brings the possibilities of innovation to Worcester, but at the same time it also brings cultural conflicts. The most important issue is the language barrier. The 2010 census shows that only one of the top ten most common home countries speak English as their primary language. Most of Worcester immigrants come from Brazil, Vietnam, Ghana and the Dominican Republic. As non-native speakers of English, they need some thrust to help them adapt to American life. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce lacks sufficient translation services, so immigrant-owned companies cannot clearly understand the functions of the Chamber of Commerce. This result can be reflected in the interview, which means although many immigrant businessmen have heard of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, they do not know what the role of the Chamber of Commerce is. Immigrants are bringing their vastly different cultures to Worcester, along with an entrepreneurialism driving the city's economy. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce ignored the services in this area and was unable to attract immigrant companies to join.

#### *Lack of targeted marketing*

The marketing here refers specifically to the promotion activities of all immigrant companies. Although the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has conducted a series of meetings and training to help members develop their company, it lacks activities to attract

potential customers. Worcester has a large number of immigrant-owned businesses, and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has not set up a special department to investigate to find those who want to join the Chamber of Commerce but do not know how to join the Chamber of Commerce.

### **Purpose and Goals**

The purpose of our Capstone project is to help the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce better market their organization and services to attract businesses that are immigrant and minority owned. To achieve the purpose, we identified three goals for our Capstone project. First, identify specific issues that have caused the disconnect between the immigrant and minority owned businesses and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. We try to find issues that resulted in fewer immigrant and minority business owners joining the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. Second, researching other chambers of commerce to identify what types of marketing tactics and services they currently have that could be applied in Worcester. We also need to conduct external research on surrounding chambers of commerce to compare and analyze their marketing methods to immigrant and minority-owned businesses. Third, to recommend marketing tactics that will attract immigrant and minority business owners. We aim to recommend effective strategies for the Chamber to use to market their services to minority and immigrant-owned businesses in Worcester.

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

**Demographics of Worcester, Massachusetts**

Worcester, Massachusetts, also known as the “Heart of the Commonwealth” is a mid-sized city located in Central Massachusetts (“Quick Facts”, n.d.). Worcester is the second largest city in New England, with an estimated population of 185,677 (“Quick Facts”, n.d.; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). Worcester is also known for its diverse population, with almost 40 percent of Worcester residents identifying as a racial or ethnic minority (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). The largest racial and/or ethnic minority groups in Worcester are Hispanic/Latino (20.9%), Black or African American (13.2%), and Asian (7.3%) (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018).

Table 1

*Population Characteristics of Worcester, Massachusetts*

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
White alone, non-Hispanic/Latino	57.1%
Black or African American	13.2%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	0.5%
Asian	7.3%
Two or More Races	4.2%
Hispanic or Latino	20.9%
Foreign-Born Persons	21.1%

*Note:* The racial category Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander has been omitted due to lack of data. (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018).

In addition to a diverse racial and ethnic community, 21.1 percent of Worcester residents are foreign-born persons, meaning there are almost forty thousand immigrants residing in Worcester (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). The percentage of foreign-born residents in Worcester is higher than both the state and national averages, 16.2 and 14 percent respectively (Massachusetts, 2018; Welker, 2018a). As of 2016, the largest immigrant communities in

Worcester were from Ghana (10%), the Dominican Republic (9%), Vietnam (9%), Albania (6%), and Brazil (5%) (Welker, 2018b). Of these five largest immigrant communities in Worcester, only Ghanaians speak English as their primary language (Welker, 2018b). Foreign-born and native-born Worcester residents both earn median household incomes at \$45,000 per year (Welker, 2018b). However, foreign-born residents make up a higher share of the \$3.7 billion in total earnings due to a higher labor participation rate (Welker, 2018b). The labor force participation rate is as high as 88 percent for African immigrants and 77 percent for Latin American immigrants (Welker, 2018b). For native-born Worcester residents the labor participation rate is only 64 percent (Welker, 2018b).

According to 2012 data from the United States Census Bureau, Worcester is home to 13,085 firms (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). Of these, 3,775 firms (28.8%) are minority owned (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). The percentage of minority owned businesses in Worcester is greater than the 14.8 percent of minority owned businesses in Massachusetts (Massachusetts, 2018). In addition, the Worcester Regional Research Bureau found that 36 percent of Worcester business owners are foreign-born persons (Welker, 2018a). In comparison, only 18 percent of all Massachusetts business owners are foreign-born residents (Welker, 2018a).

Immigrant business owners in Worcester are most likely to own businesses in the food service industry (28%) and the administrative/support services (28%). In fact, 71 percent of all Worcester restaurants or food service businesses are owned by an immigrant (Welker, 2018a). Immigrant owned businesses account for 78 percent of landscaping businesses in the administrative service industry (Welker, 2018a). Thirteen percent of immigrant business owners operate businesses in the retail industry, 9 percent in construction, and 6 percent in transportation (Welker, 2018a).

### **Economic Development in Worcester, Massachusetts**

The City of Worcester has experienced significant economic growth since the 1990s (Eckelbecker, 2019; Welker, 2019). The Worcester Economic Index, a measure of the region's economy, rose 3.2 percent in 2018, the highest rate of growth since the 1990s (Eckelbecker, 2019). Several projects and development opportunities are being undertaken in Worcester with the hope that they will further economic growth and business opportunities for the city. One example is the \$540 million CitySquare project, which includes 1.3 million square feet of residential and retail space, a parking garage, a Marriot Hotel, and a public park in downtown Worcester (Petrishen, 2017). In addition, Worcester is preparing for the arrival of the Pawtucket Red Sox with a major redevelopment of the Canal District including the redesign of Kelley Square, the construction of the Polar Park ballpark, two new hotels, and 65,000 square feet of new retail and restaurant space ("Worcester Red Sox", 2018; Welker, 2019).

Worcester is expecting continued growth and development in the following years and immigrant and minority communities are a fundamental piece of this redevelopment. With the growth expected in Worcester, the large, and previously untapped, immigrant and minority business community presents a significant opportunity for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and the City of Worcester. Most importantly, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has the opportunity to build relationships with immigrant and minority business owners and help their businesses grow in tandem with Worcester as a whole. In addition, the Chamber has the opportunity to increase its membership numbers and extend their reach across businesses in Worcester.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **Informal Interviews Method**

According to the Chamber, there are misunderstandings and misconceptions about the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and its value to immigrant and minority business owners. The city estimates approximately 37% of its businesses are owned by immigrants or minorities. Following a meeting with our client, our group started off by thinking about the best way of collecting local anecdotal data without seeming as if we were soliciting the Chamber to the immigrant and minority business owners. In addition, we wanted to create deliverables that portrayed a comparison of other Chambers of Commerce that was either local or located in an area that was compiled of a similar diverse demographic as Worcester's. Furthermore, our group decided to conduct research into specific local cultural events that the Chamber could potentially collaborate with. The purpose of such events are to increase community involvement and to represent the culturally diverse communities such as Main South.

To start the interview process, our group needed to get in touch with individuals who act as 'gatekeepers'. Essentially, these are people who have been heavily involved in the Worcester business industry and have lots of relationships stemming from their participation in the city's economic development. They have either personally been involved in or have worked collaboratively with a significant number of immigrant and minority businesses in the city. We contacted Joseph O'Brien, former Worcester mayor and current professor at Clark University, to help us network and search for these gatekeepers. Through email and phone calls, Professor O'Brien connected our group with Ivette Olmeda, who currently works with MassDevelopment as a Transformations Development Initiative Fellow.



Olmeda has been aware of the Chamber of Commerce for over thirty years although she has never been a member because she is not a business owner. However, she provided her own interpretation of what the Chamber is lacking from an outsider's perspective. Olmeda explained, "Again, it is the kind of relationships. They want to gather Latinos and minorities, and nobody know this event and I lead six people went to that event. It depends on what kind of business they have. If you talk to some neighborhood businesses here, they don't have time to attend this meeting because a lot of them are running a mom and pop shop. They are running their business seven days a week. So, for them, what is the point of going to the meeting? Most of them have been doing it for twenty plus years".

Ivette invited us to a meeting hosted by the Main South Business Organization (MSBO). The MSBO is a business alliance made up of local business owners formed by Olmeda to help promote further economic development in the heavily diverse Main South district. She is also the director of the Latin American Business Association's (LABO) board of directors. They focus primarily on increasing business growth opportunities for Latin American businesses. They provide leadership and developmental support in key areas such as management, financial, as well as social and cultural enrichment opportunities.

At the MSBO meeting, our group was able to learn more about the organization's mission and purpose. We interviewed six business owners who were non-chamber members. We asked them to describe their experience running a small business in Worcester. We recorded the conversations and later identified salient themes and issues based on the answers that directly addressed potential opportunities and ideas that the Worcester Chamber of Commerce could use in re-framing their marketing.

Our second round of interviews with non-chamber members occurred at the local Calabash Café, located on 33 Canterbury Street in Worcester. Thanks to the help of Robert Thomas, President and COO of the New Americans Center for Disease Control and Protection, we were able to corral together several local immigrant and minority business owners to meet at the Café. Our group talked with the owners individually and recorded our conversations to analyze later. The business owners ranged from the owner of a supermarket to the owner of a construction company. Additional business owner industries included landscaping and roofing, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, travel agency, beauty salon, barber shop, and a restaurant. With collecting data, it was our goal to interview as many different business owners in as many different business industries as possible. This eliminates the possibility of a bias in answers pertaining to the industry's relationship to the Chamber. At this meeting at Calabash Café, we managed to speak with six business owners, bringing our total number of interviews with non-chamber members to fifteen.

### **Case Study Methods**

We identified eight cities and towns with chambers of commerce to target for interviews. The chambers of commerce that we reached out to by phone and email were the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce (EBRCC), the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce, the Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, and the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce. These cities were chosen because of their similarities to Worcester, MA, their locations in the Northeast, or because a project member had a connection at the chamber. We chose to focus on the Greater

Boston Chamber of Commerce and EBRCC as case studies for this project. We chose these two chambers due to the similarities between Worcester, East Brunswick, and Boston, the relevancy of interview responses, and the differences between the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and the EBRCC. On one end of the spectrum, the Greater Boston Chamber has been around for over 100 years and serves a community of over 185,000 people. On the other end, the EBRCC has only been around for 2 years and serves a community of just under 49,000 people. Although these chambers come from different ends of the spectrum, both chambers have successfully engaged the immigrant and minority business communities in their regions, making them excellent case studies to examine in comparison to the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The interview questions were designed to collect information about the membership base of each chamber of commerce, the types of targeted marketing conducted towards minority/immigrant owned businesses, partnerships with community and culture organizations, and targeted services provided to minority/immigrant owned businesses. Initial contact was made with each chamber of commerce by email or phone. Responses were received by phone or email, based on the preference of the respondent from each chamber of commerce. For the complete list of questions please see Appendix C.

### **Worcester Cultural Organizations and Potential Partnerships**

When doing research, the data collected is usually divided into two types: primary resources and secondary resources. Primary resources need to be collected by yourself. Common methods are observation, questionnaires and interviews. Secondary resources are the use of existing data, such as government or publications, earlier research and mass media. When studying how the

Worcester Chamber of Commerce attracts immigrant-owned businesses, we need to be aware of the existence of cultural organizations. Their functions are similar to those of the Chamber of Commerce, which are designed to help immigrant companies adapt to the American society and develop steadily. Therefore, finding cultural organizations in the Worcester area has become one of the research goals. Southeast Asian Coalition is a non-profit organization which supports Southeast Asian immigrants, refugees and long-term residents to meet their basic needs, overcome language and cultural barriers. We chose interviews as a way to get access to primary resources. Questions include how much you know about the Worcester Chamber of Commerce, how you want to work with the Worcester Chamber of Commerce, and how to attract immigrant-owned business to join the chamber. This approach is both flexible and targeted. In order to better record information, virtual communication, such as e-mail, is a good way to obtain information as well. Especially for non-native speakers of English, this method can record the details of the interview more accurately. The main route to access secondary resources is the official website of cultural organizations. Many organizations are unable to provide specific information for some reason, so the official website has become the only place where information can be collected. On the website, researchers can discover the mission statement and events of these organizations.

## **Chapter Four: Results and Reflection**

### **Informal Interviews Results**

Each city has its characteristics, so the development of each chamber reflects the characteristics of a town. The urban structure is different, and the business groups are different. That is the reason why the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has its characteristics. Worcester is a city combined by many immigrants and is composed of many chambers of commerce in multiple regions. Worcester's affiliate Chambers of Commerce are Auburn, Blackstone Valley, Central Mass. South, Wachusett Area, and Webster Dudley Oxford. In our project, we focused on the business of immigrant groups to provide more financial resources for the Chamber of Commerce by understanding the immigrant groups. We gained insights from the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce through interviews with immigrant groups. The Worcester Chamber of Commerce has an irreplaceable role in the development of Worcester. The Chamber of Commerce is a bridge between business and government, business and business, and it can help every business organization. The Chamber of Commerce is a vital link between the government and people in business, businessmen and businessmen, and merchants and society. It is mainly a non-profit organization that serves members of the Chamber of Commerce.

Chambers of Commerce can aggregate popularity, integrate funds, and bring together dispersed individuals. Worcester has many commercial organizations established by immigrants. We also interviewed some local business organizations run by immigrants in Worcester. We found the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to bring together business groups in Worcester to provide information to Worcester's business community and identify business opportunities. Different business groups learn from each other, share experiences, complement

each other and develop businesses together. While developing local businesses, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is also introducing new projects to make its assets more flexible. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is a great medium to connect people from different places. For example, in our interviews with the immigration industry, most of these people came from South America. They are a group that helps each other and share information. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce can help business owners balance competition and cooperation.

There are a variety of activities organized by the Worcester chamber such as Job Fair, Worcester women's leadership conference, seminar and so on. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce hosts more than ninety events each year to allow members to communicate with thousands of regional professionals. Today, some of the most critical skills in Business is interpersonal skills. Although the Worcester Chamber of Commerce has conducted a series of conferences and training to help members develop their companies, it lacks activities to attract potential customers. Worcester has a large number of immigrant-owned companies. The Chamber does not have a dedicated department to conduct investigations to find those who want to join the Chamber but do not know how. At the same time, many business operators do not have time to participate in some commercial activities. They have to go to the store every day and they have no chance to participate. There are little opportunities for this group of people to know the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

With the development of the technology era, the integration of Internet thinking is indispensable for the Chamber of Commerce. Under the background of the continuous development of the Internet, big data, cloud computing, and other technologies, "Internet thinking" will be an innovative force to promote the development of the Chamber of Commerce,

not only to solve the space and time problems but also will be more efficient and effective. In our research, we found that the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce lacks multilingualism. Most Worcester immigrants come from Brazil, Vietnam, Ghana and the Dominican Republic. Worcester has many foreigners, and they are not fluent in English, but the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce only offers an English language service now. It is necessary for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to provide multilingual services to these immigrant business organizations. In the official website of the Chamber, there also is only English. We believe that it is essential for the Chamber to broaden its services to provide multilingual services. They are combining current science and technology, setting up translation software on the official website and providing professional translation services to help low skills of English-speaking business organizations. This is necessary services for the future development of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Throughout our conversations, we noticed some salient issues that our group was able to concentrate into general overarching themes. Based off the answers from the interviewees, recommendations were developed so the Chamber could consider them in future marketing campaigns and events. An important part of our group's research was to make sure our recommendations were sourced from the specific demographic that the Chamber wants to work alongside. Our interviews not only helped us learn about what the issue is with the relationship between the Chamber from these business owners. Through considerate participation in the cultural business community, our group was able to learn the Main South business blueprint and experience the cultural dignity behind Worcester's small businesses.

**Case Study Results: Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce**

Founded in 1909, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce is one of the largest regional chambers of commerce in the New England area. According to the data collected by United States Census Bureau, Boston has a population of 685,094, much larger than Worcester's population of 185,677 (Boston, Massachusetts, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). Even though Boston's population is almost four times the population of Worcester, the racial population characteristics are very similar to one another. As reference, Table 2 shows that the percent of Asian in the total population is 9.5 percent in Boston, while the percent of Asian is 7.3 in Worcester (Boston, Massachusetts, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). In addition, Hispanic or Latino makes up 19.4 percent of Boston's population, and 20.9 percent of Worcester population is Hispanic or Latino (Boston, Massachusetts, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). Moreover, 17,686 businesses, or 29.8 percent are owned by minorities in Boston, while Worcester has 3,775 minority-owned businesses that constitute 28.9 percent of total businesses of Worcester (Boston, Massachusetts, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018).

There are two reasons to explain why we chose the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce as a case study for our project. The first reason is that it is one of the largest chambers of commerce in the New England area, so we have a lot of events to consider. These events would ideally be any sort of cultural experience that minority or immigrant-owned businesses would be interested in working at. The second reason is, as we can see from Table 2, there are several similarities regarding population and business characteristics between Boston and Worcester, as well as the short distance between two cities. This particular characteristic can largely improve the feasibility and adaptability of targeted events and strategies we find in our research.



Table 2

*Comparison of Population Characteristics for Boston, MA and Worcester, MA*

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Boston, MA</u>	<u>Worcester, MA</u>
White alone	52.8%	57.1%
Black or African American	25.3%	13.2%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	0.4%	0.5%
Asian	9.5%	7.3%
Two or More Races	4.9%	4.2%
Hispanic or Latino	19.4%	20.9%
Foreign Born Persons	28.3%	21.1%

*Note:* The racial category Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander has been omitted due to lack of data. (Boston, Massachusetts, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018).

### *Interviews*

To access more specific information, we interviewed staff from the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce via phone call and email. They said the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce has 1,300 members from different industries. Similar to the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, higher paying members of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce usually get more attention. They stated that this results in small businesses dropping their membership more often because they recognize that they get less chamber attention. According to the Chamber's staff, a good percentage of minority-owned businesses are small businesses in Boston, so they were fortunate to be able to create a program that worked well with these business owners. They stated that a couple of years ago, the Chamber recognized that they had not focused enough in terms of supporting minority or immigrant owned businesses. As a result, the chamber reevaluated their mission and values to ensure it aligned with their desire to provide more support for minority and immigrant business owners. They envisioned an opportunity to grow and executed it flawlessly.

Moreover, the Chamber always reaches out to connect with the community. For example, the Chamber supports ethnic and cultural organizations who have ties with other chambers, such

as the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and the LGBT Chamber of Commerce. The Boston Chamber stated that they have done targeted outreach through marketing campaigns in the past, but completely changed their focus after they reevaluated their mission and values. Now, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce focuses more on what programs they can put in place to support minority businesses, instead of how they can sell the businesses a membership. The Chamber spokesperson said, “if they participate in our programs and become a member that’s great, but it isn’t our goal”. Lastly, they strongly recommended Pacesetters Program, which is one of its core programs initiated by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, to assist small local businesses.

#### *Pacesetters Program*

The Pacesetter program was launched in 2018. The Pacesetter program is “a partnership of large and mid-sized companies and anchor institutions who use their collective purchasing power to create opportunities at scale for local, ethnic minority-owned businesses” (Pacesetter Impact Report, 2018). In this program, pacesetters are businesses that are committed to increasing their supplier diversity. Pacesetters commit to measuring, reporting, and increasing spending at local minority-owned businesses. In addition, pacesetters attend networking events to share best practices with other pacesetters and matchmaking events to connect with additional priority suppliers. Priority suppliers are local, minority owned businesses who have the capability of providing business-to-business services to mid- to large- size companies (Pacesetter Impact Report, 2018).

According to Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Pacesetters Program has four goals. First, the program aims to increase the number of contracts between Pacesetters and local

minority-owned business through the program's matchmaking process and increasing dollars spent by setting "bold diverse procurement spending goals" (Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 2019). Second, the program emphasizes peer-learning by fostering networking between pacesetters to share best practices, enhance diversity efforts, and further build momentum around the initiative (Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 2019). Third, the program uses data-driven sourcing by encouraging Pacesetters to collect, measure, and report on their spending with local minority-owned businesses. The Chamber uses Pacesetter spending data to track the progress of the program and inform areas for diversifying spending (Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 2019). This goal helps the Chamber to make evidence-based decisions to further develop the program. The last goal of the program is to raise awareness about the economic benefits of creating opportunities for minority-owned businesses and serving as a model for the Greater Boston business community (Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 2019). The main takeaway from this program is their attitude towards advocating for small businesses. It emphasizes the cooperation between companies by sharing or exchanging information and experiences, which will lead to the best practices for the organization.

By taking a series of action, the Pacesetters Program has already seen significant success. In the Pacesetters Impact Report (2018), the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce announced that the program had already resulted in thirteen new deals, creating \$3 million in new revenue for priority suppliers and more than seventy business connections at networking and industry specific events. Based on the results, we believe the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce should consider implementing a program such as the Pacesetters Program in order to promote the importance of working with small businesses.

### Case Study Results: East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce

East Brunswick Township is located in central New Jersey. According to the most recent estimations from the United States Census Bureau (East Brunswick Township, New Jersey, 2018), East Brunswick has a population of 48,840, much smaller than Worcester’s population of 185,677 (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). Although Worcester is almost four times the size of East Brunswick, the racial and population characteristics of East Brunswick are very similar to those of Worcester, as shown in Table 3. Most notably, only 61 percent of East Brunswick residents identified as White (non-Hispanic/Latino) compared to 57.1 percent of Worcester residents (East Brunswick Township, New Jersey, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). In addition, East Brunswick has a higher percentage of immigrants than Worcester, with 33 percent and 21.1 percent of the population being foreign born persons, respectfully (East Brunswick Township, New Jersey, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018).

Table 3

<i>Comparison of Population Characteristics for East Brunswick, NJ and Worcester, MA</i>		
<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>East Brunswick, NJ</u>	<u>Worcester, MA</u>
White alone, non-Hispanic/Latino	61%	57.1%
Black or African American	4.6%	13.2%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	0.1%	0.5%
Asian	25.6%	7.3%
Two or More Races	2.4%	4.2%
Hispanic or Latino	7.5%	20.9%
Foreign Born Persons	33%	21.1%

*Note:* The racial category Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander has been omitted due to lack of data. (East Brunswick, New Jersey, 2018; Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018).

According to the most recent U.S. Census data, East Brunswick, New Jersey has 5,596 firms (East Brunswick Township, 2018). Of the total firms, 29.9 percent are minority-owned (East Brunswick Township, 2018). In comparison, 28.9 percent of the 13,085 firms in Worcester

are minority owned (Worcester, Massachusetts, 2018). While the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce serves a community much larger than the EBRCC, the demographic breakdown of each city makes the EBRCC an appropriate case study for the purposes of this project.

The EBRCC was founded in September 2017 to restore, energize, and revitalize the business community in East Brunswick, New Jersey (East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce (EBRCC), 2019). Their mission is to promote business and community growth and development through the core values of strength, unity, diversity, and revitalization (BCRCC, 2019). In its first year, the EBRCC grew to over 100 members (EBRCC, 2019).

According to interviews with the Economic Development staff, the EBRCC does not ask members to identify their racial or ethnic background and, therefore, does not track statistics to determine what portion of their members are immigrants or minorities. However, they estimate that their membership base is reflective of the diversity of East Brunswick and state that they have members who identify as Indian, Asian, European, and African American, to name a few. EBRCC does not currently conduct any targeted marketing towards immigrant or minority communities. However, they stated that the lack of targeted marketing was only due to their infancy and the rapid initial membership growth during the first year of operation.

The current focus of the EBRCC to provide services to immigrant and minority businesses is by ensuring a diverse offering of events, programs, and trainings available to members and the public. The EBRCC states that they ensure that people of different backgrounds are speakers, hosts, and fully included in the programming they offer. By making sure their presenters, speakers, and workshop facilitators are representative of the diverse East Brunswick community, they increase the perceived value of their services for minority and immigrant business owners and allow diverse opportunities for professional growth and

networking. Similarly, they make sure to offer events at a variety of times and venues, enabling members to attend at least some events based on their schedules. In addition, the EBRCC ensures that they are present and involved in community events that occur in New Jersey, embedding them directly in their local community. For example, the Chamber ensures that they are represented at Shop East Brunswick business events. Lastly EBRCC attempts to partner with other community organizations at every opportunity. For example, one of the Chambers most recent events was the East Brunswick Business Forum co-sponsored by the EBRCC and the Mayor's Office. This event featured speakers from both organizations, law enforcement, Shop East Brunswick, the Department of Recreation, the Township Magazine, Parks and Community Services, and other related organizations in the city, providing a comprehensive picture of the services available to business owners in one convenient event (East Brunswick Business Forum, 2019).

### **Local Cultural Organizations**

The Southeast Asian Coalition of Massachusetts (SEACMA) was founded in 1999 and was established as a nonprofit agency in 2001. It is responsible for addressing the lack of cultural and linguistic support services for immigrants from Southeast Asia. Since 1999, SEACMA has been the gateway for many immigrants and refugees to come to their office for assistance. The clients of SEACMA are from all over the world, not just Asia. It's by their reputation of having culturally and linguistically competent staff and the wrap-around services they offer, such as translation, interpretation, youth program, elder programs, cultural heritage preservation, ESL and other Asian language class, to helping their client's access healthcare, housing, jobs, education and more. Becoming a member does not cost anything and most of the money for the

development comes from donations. SEACMA has several successful campaigns to increase the number of Asian voters in MA and other states, to promote Asian cultural heritage (Asian Festival with 3000 attendants, Moon Festival with 500 attendants), to maximize numbers of Affordable Care Act applications (30,000 applicants in Worcester), and in the Census 2010. They are preparing for the Census 2020.

Although the SEACMA is a member of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, they knew very little about the working methods of the Chamber and the services they provide. They would like to see the chamber make a real effort, like providing culturally and linguistically responsive resources and a real partnership with SEACMA to assist Asian immigrants and refugees to successfully start their small businesses. They are grateful that one Vietnamese business owner will be honored by the Worcester Business Journal this year. SEACMA has assisted more than twenty Asian and Arabic speakers who were interested in small business ownership since 2016. Five of them have successfully started their own business.

### **Salient Issues**

In the investigation process of our project, we identified four salient issues. The four salient issues are that immigrant and minority business owners feel the Chamber lacks a sense of community, have never heard of the Chamber, feel concern or anxiety about “not fitting in” with the chamber membership, and have a general lack of understanding of the Chamber’s value proposition.

#### *Sense of community*

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has not completed extensive investigation into the small communities and therefore, does not fully understand the communities. There are a lot of scattered communities in Worcester. Many of the clients we interviewed are small business owners from different communities. Many operate stores in their communities. They say there are many different stores in the community, but few connections between different stores. They aim to operate their own business well in the community and to get in touch with other business owners and help each other. For example, Bob runs a small supermarket in a community, and Sarah runs restaurants. If they establish cooperation, when someone goes to the restaurant which belongs to Sarah, Sarah can give her the consumer a voucher which can be used in Bob's store. In our interviews, we found that these small-scale self-employed operators are eager to build cooperation with other business owners. They hope that the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce can help them network with other employers in the community and help them attract more customers who live around the neighborhood.

*Never heard of chamber*

Through our project process we also found that many people do not know the existence of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. Although some people may be aware of the Chamber, many do not understand what the role of the Chamber is. Many people stated that the Chamber of Commerce has never introduced itself to their community. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce never contacted them on their initiative and they were unsure as to how to get in touch with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce themselves. It is evident that there are little chance and channels for these small business owners to get a connection with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. These merchants lack understanding and



awareness of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and how they can learn more about the Chamber.

*Concern or anxiety of “not fitting in”*

Among our interviewees, a businesswoman told us about the Chamber activities that she had attended before. She said that she felt very uncomfortable when she participated in the event. Everyone who participated in the event wore formal suits and made her feel a significant amount of pressure. She felt very embarrassed to communicate with those people and was unsure of how to communicate with other members at the event. This made her feel very anxious and awkward. Because our interviews focused on businesses run by Worcester's immigrants, many of them did not receive formal education and do not have experience in an official setting like the one described above, so when they attend this formal event, they may feel out of place. They hope that the activities organized by the Chamber of Commerce will be more welcoming so that each of them can communicate freely.

*Misunderstood value proposition*

Many people do not understand the actual role of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce and do not understand the value the Chamber can provide to them. They do not know what benefits come with joining the Chamber of Commerce or what services are provided by the Chamber. Even if they had joined the Chamber of Commerce in the past, they did not understand what benefits the Chamber of Commerce would bring to them and how to utilize their membership effectively. In the interview, we found that many people have misunderstandings about the Chamber of Commerce. They perceive that the Chamber of Commerce is meant for

large, successful business owners and their small business owners are not eligible to participate. For them, the Chamber of Commerce is hard to touch.

### **Our Professional Learnings**

We understand the business model of Worcester, the importance of immigration to Worcester, and how to run a business better. Due to various reasons, the Chamber of Commerce is very unbalanced in the operation process. Some chambers of commerce are flourishing, so they have enough money to organize various activities. Additionally, the internal organization of them is excellent, the work objectives are clear, the events are vigorous, and the popularity is extreme. On the other hand, there are chambers of commerce having difficulties in carrying out activities. New members are difficult to develop and old members are challenging to keep, they can't receive membership fees, and they even exist in name only. Through this project we have learned to think critically about why some chambers are successful while others struggle to do this. We believe that this is inseparable from the people who operate the chambers of commerce. There are excellent connections between operators' understanding of the nature of the chambers of commerce and the way and ability to operate. First of all, the central question of the Chamber of Commerce is why companies will voluntarily join the Chamber of Commerce. Enterprises face many risks in their business development, especially those run by immigrants. They face more difficulties and challenges than those run by local people. In Worcester, most of the business groups composed of immigrants are small and medium-sized organizations. In these small and medium-sized enterprises, they often face problems such as shortage of social resources and lack of information. In the process of continuous development, more and more business individuals will feel weak in their strength, so in this case, "holding the group to warm

up" is an essential guiding ideology and purpose of the company's willingness to join the chamber of commerce.

There is an old saying in China that translates to, "Birds of a feather flock together". In most cases, only when they find people who have similar aims with them, they will have a sense of security and belonging. In order to strengthen communication with enterprises, reduce administrative costs, and improve the efficiency of public decision-making, the government needs to play a role. To cope with various difficulties, maintain legitimate rights and interests, reduce operating costs, and achieve faster development. It also requires the Chamber of Commerce to play its role. The Chamber of Commerce can help individuals with common difficulties, current demands, shared geography, common goals, and shared ideals.

The Chamber of Commerce stands between the government and the enterprise, serving both the government and the members. Many chambers of commerce do not reflect the essence of the chamber of commerce. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce regularly takes on public policy initiatives that have an impact on businesses and the cost of doing business.

The Worcester Chamber of Commerce is made up of Worcester and the surrounding businessmen, who are concerned about making money and how to make money. Most members will lose interest if the event organized by the Chamber of Commerce leaves the central theme—making money. Therefore, the focus of the Chamber of Commerce should cater to the wishes of members, stand at the commanding heights of industry development, examine the government's policies and trends in various industries. Also, it also should focus on the wisdom and strength of its members and make appropriate use of existing resources to manage its operations for its members. It can make suggestions for businesses to promote the development of the industry and

maximize the benefits of member companies which need to baes on the scope permitted by government policies.

Technology has brought significant changes to our lives. This is something we cannot deny. For any business today, it is essential to keep up with the times. If you still follow your previous philosophy, this company will be eliminated by time and technology. We learned from the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce that it is necessary to combine current science and technology. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has its official website, and anyone can get news from the official website of Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. Expanding the online business will undoubtedly provide an excellent opportunity for the development of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. However, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce did not make good use of the current translation function, so the problem of language barriers caused the Chamber of Commerce to lose a lot of immigrant businesses. If the Chamber provides translation services for them, the Chamber will attract more people to join in. Admittedly, many individual business people have to work hard to make money for a better life. Many people take their time and energy to their business. There is no time to rest for them. Working seven days a week is a common practice for them. Their professionalism and dedication is worth learning.

## Chapter Five: Recommendations and Conclusion

### Marketing

After conducting our research and looking at the salient issues based off the answers of our interviews, we concluded that the Chamber must implement a cultural marketing strategy. The ideas our group came up with revolve around the community culture that is very prevalent amongst the immigrant and minority business owners.

Just to put things into perspective, if you were an immigrant from a country and came to the United States to run a business there would be clear obstacles that you will have to face. Whether it has to do with learning how to manage your business on the fly, or maybe the language barrier is making things difficult communication wise. Imagine your business being located in the Main South neighborhood where there are a considerable amount of immigrant and minority businesses. Most of the time, these immigrant or minority business owners will reach out to other local community businesses that speak their language and share their culture. As simple as it sounds, a business owner who is an immigrant or minority will usually seek advice from someone who they feel comfortable with.

The marketing recommendations our group came up with are very much “community and culture” oriented instead of “city” oriented. Based on the conversations we had with all the business owners, we feel there is a significant opportunity to attract the immigrant and minority demographic to the Chamber. The idea is to market to the source. We believe the Chamber needs to physically insert themselves more into the community so the owners can feel welcomed and can familiarize themselves with the Chamber at a more personable level. For example, having networking events at a park such as University Park. Another location could be the YMCA located a little more downtown. Most of the Chamber’s events are held either at their office

location or at another location that is either too far away or is being held at inconvenient hours. For example, some of their networking and seminar events are held during mid-week from 8:30AM to 10:00AM. Another aspect to consider with the immigrant/minority business owners is that they don't have the freedom to take time out of their work days to even think of attending these events. They are small businesses that rely heavily on income during the week. If the Chamber takes into consideration the protocol and schedule of these immigrant and minority business owners, there are opportunities that can be taken advantage of.

Creating a marketing plan by using the term, "shop local", would be a great opportunity to consider in order to boost the Chamber's cultural morale within the Main South community. As our client mentioned, there has also been issues regarding a negative perspective on the Chamber by the immigrant and minority business owners. If the Chamber adjusts their value proposition mindset to supporting and advocating for these businesses, the underlying issue will fix itself. During one of our interviews, we heard a great example of how the President of the newly established Worcester Red Sox attended one of the Main South Business Organization meetings is promoting local small businesses. A few months ago, Charles Steinberg attended a MSBO meeting to interact and learn about the organization, and also showed a special sneak preview of a WooSox promotional video. Afterwards, a business owner at the meeting, who was an immigrant, suggested to put a few shots of the Main South neighborhood in the video since it did not show any part of it. Mr. Steinberg vowed to make edits to the final product of the video so it would be more inclusive to the diverse Main South community. Examples such as this story is what the Chamber should consider doing more of in terms of physical representation in the community. Our group also thought of a potential cultural ambassador for the Chamber, who

would be responsible for attending the various cultural business events to eliminate the notion that the Chamber is unwelcoming and “not for everyone”.

Finally, a cultural celebration event would be the ultimate form of marketing to the source. As mentioned in the salient issues section, the number one issue based off the answers of the interviews was the simple lack of representation in the communities with a rich population of immigrant and minority businesses. Lack of representation can be fixed through personable and accessible interactions, which the Chamber needs to do more of. The easiest way for the Chamber to start is to show their appreciation of the different cultures that Worcester is made up of through designated cultural community events. Once again, our group recommends that these events be held at a public area such as a park or a community center. The times of these events should ideally be on the weekends as well, this way the owners can attend as well as everyone else in their community. If the event needs to be catered, asking a local restaurant nearby would be the best way to congregate and show cultural appreciation. In return, business owners will be more likely to consider joining the Chamber because they will feel more familiar and comfortable with what services they offer to businesses.

### **Programming**

Once the Chamber has implemented a targeted marketing and communication strategy, they should institute new programs to integrate and sustain the diverse business owners brought in. We believe that the chamber would benefit from introducing three program models to their services. First, the chamber should develop a small-business mentorship program for immigrant and minority business owners. Second, the chamber should consider developing a business to

business program based on the Pacesetter program model. Finally, the Chamber should introduce a targeted chamber ambassador program for immigrant and minority business owners.

In the past, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has been able to sell memberships to the immigrant and minority business community but have struggled to retain their membership. To ensure that the Chamber is able to retain the new immigrant and minority members, we recommend they develop a small business mentorship program targeted at these new members. A small-business mentorship program targeted at immigrant and minority business owners would provide added value to their chamber memberships through individualized assistance and coaching. The mentorship program should be implemented once the Chamber has successfully implemented the marketing recommendations above and gained more immigrant and minority members.

Chamber mentors should be experienced business people who are willing to coach one to three small-business owners on at least a monthly basis. The mentorship program should cover topics and themes ranging from general advice for operating a business in Worcester, explaining Worcester's rules and regulations that affect small business owners, networking strategies, strategic management of small businesses, and other professional issues that members would like coaching on. We recommend that the Chamber provide a loose structure of how Chamber mentors should coach businesses owners but should allow mentors some freedom to individualize the curriculum to the needs of each owner.

For example, Chamber mentors can coach business owners on how to market their business in the community using both traditional marketing and digital platforms to market their business online. In addition, Chamber mentors can advise them about finance fundamentals and help the small-business owners understand the basics of financial planning, streamlining their



processes, and helping them make the most of every dollar the business earns. Chamber mentors can provide also provide an accounting foundation for immigrant and minority small-business owners by helping them understand the accounting jargon used in the United States, help them learn about accounting for labor and inventory costs, preparing financial statements, and even determining business valuation and raising capital when it's time to grow their business. Chamber mentors can also help business owners understand and meet federal tax obligations by making them aware of necessary tax forms and regulations and explaining how to correctly file and pay their taxes electronically. Finally, Chamber mentors can explain some basic laws that impact small businesses in the region. For example, Chamber mentors can make business owners aware of advertising laws, employment and labor laws, finance law, intellectual property, online business law, environment, privacy laws, foreign workers, immigration, and employee eligibility, workplace safety and health, and a roadmap for small business regulations.

A Chamber mentorship program would result in increased Chamber membership retention rates for immigrant and minority business owners, increased membership usage by these business owners, and more informed and prepared immigrant and minority business owners. In addition, the one-on-one structure of the mentorship program would help build close networking connections between mentors and participants. These relationships would help break down the barriers to integrating the new business owners into the pre-existing Chamber membership group and encouraging them to utilize their Chamber membership to the greatest extent.

The second program that the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce should implement is a business-to-business program inspired by the Pacesetter program model. The Chamber can use a business-to-business program to help minority and immigrant suppliers

develop new revenue streams and facilitate networking between businesses. They can also use this program to empower larger corporate members to support local minority and immigrant businesses by diversifying their suppliers.

A business-to-business program should be implemented only after the immigrant and minority businesses have been integrated into chamber and trust has been built between the Chamber and the new members. Implementing a business-to-business program would benefit immigrant and minority businesses in the short term due to the new contracts and revenue streams developed through the program. A business-to-business program would also help sustain the immigrant and minority business community in the long term by ensuring these business owners do not get left behind as Worcester continues to grow, develop, and revitalize.

The last recommended program the Chamber should implement is a targeted chamber ambassador program focused on outreach to immigrant and minority businesses. The targeted chamber ambassador program would sustain the relationships built between the Chamber and the minority and immigrant business communities in Worcester, through the marketing and programming strategies previously discussed. The targeted chamber ambassador program could be developed as a branch of the current Chamber Ambassador program, or as a separate entity. Targeted ambassadors would provide a valuable member-to-member link and would help the Chamber better understand and respond to the needs of immigrant and minority members. This committee would actively assist immigrant and minority members to be better informed about the Chamber's services as well as opportunities to participate in Chamber programs.

This targeted program should be operated similar to the current Chamber Ambassador program but focused only on reaching out to and supporting minority and immigrant businesses in understanding and utilizing the chamber membership. Ideally, the targeted Chamber

ambassadors would be selected from the group of new members brought in from the expanded marketing and programming strategy. However, the Chamber should also consider involving members of the Board of Directors and Chamber staff in supporting the targeted chamber ambassador program. Involving the Board of Directors and Chamber staff would help change immigrant and minority business owner's perception that the Chamber only values large corporate members. For sample marketing materials for a targeted Chamber Ambassador program please see Appendix D.

### **Conclusion**

We believe that this problem is not as complex as we once believed. Our interviews with other chambers of commerce have shown that the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is not the only chamber faced with this problem. Interviews with immigrant and minority business owners who are not currently chamber members show that they do not perceive a strong sense of community at the Chamber, have not heard of the Chamber, are concerned that they will not "fit in" with the Chamber members, or misunderstand the Chamber's value proposition. We believe that with targeted marketing campaigns and expanded programming options the chamber can expand their reach into the immigrant and minority business community and more effectively support these businesses in Worcester.

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**Appendices**

Appendix A

Project Charter



School of Professional Studies

Project Charter  
Worcester Regional Chamber of  
Commerce

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**Glossary of Terms in a Project Charter**

This glossary defines key terms used in this document. Although some of the terms will have slightly different definitions outside of this project, this glossary defines the meaning within this initiative.

**Assumption** – An item taken to be factual even though that fact has not been confirmed. Wherever possible the accuracy of assumptions is validated during the project

**Constraint** – An unchangeable condition that impacts the project.

**Contingency** – An activity, budget or time period that is held in reserve in order to minimize the impact that a risk has on the project if that risk is realized

**Major Stakeholder** – One of the key interested parties and decision makers in the project.

**Mitigation** – An activity that is undertaken to minimize the impact and /or the likelihood of occurrence of an adverse risk or to maximize the impact and /or the likelihood of occurrence of a positive risk

**Project Charter** – This document. The document that authorizes the project and sets out the framework for what is to be done and how it is to be managed.

**Project Manager** – The person responsible for the management of the execution of all work items.

**Required End State** – The definition of what constitutes a completed project.

**Risk** – An uncertainty that may impact the project in either a positive or negative manner if it occurs.

**Scope** – The sum of the changes to be made in order to achieve the Required End State.

**Steering Committee** – The group of people responsible for making major decisions on the project.

## **1. Project Overview**

### **a. Introduction**

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is an organization that provides services to more than 2,000 member businesses in Central Massachusetts. Some benefits provided by the Chamber include, advocating on behalf of member businesses at all levels of government, providing free advertising in their member directory, hosting professional development seminars and events, as well as offering numerous networking opportunities.

The Chamber recognizes that there is a lack of awareness of the benefits of Chamber membership among immigrant and minority business owners in Worcester. In addition, they have identified a lack of trust between immigrant and minority business owners and the Chamber. Since the city estimates that 37% of Worcester businesses are minority or immigrant owned, the Chamber is looking to find ways to be more relevant to this group, build trust between business owners and the chamber, and more successfully communicate the benefits that the Chamber can provide to these businesses.

### **b. Major Stakeholders**

The major stakeholders involved in this project are the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and its staff, the members of the Clark University capstone project team, and the capstone advisor, Professor Richard Aroian. These stakeholders have a vested interest in this project and will have access to any information they might require from this charter and the project as a whole.

### **c. Document Purpose**

This document will serve as a tangible agreement between the project team and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. The goals and scope of the project will be clearly outlined in this charter to ensure all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the project. This

charter will also outline the desired end state and the deliverables to be produced for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. The charter will also detail assumptions, constraints, and risks associated with the project. This charter will also outline the communication process between stakeholders, including the frequency of communication. In addition, the charter will detail roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. Lastly, all major stakeholders will provide their signature to confirm their agreement to all commitments outlined in the project charter.

**2. Project End State and Scope**

**a. Required End State**

At the end of the semester we will give the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce a research document about how other chambers of commerce market their services to immigrant and minority business owners. In addition, we will identify specific events for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to consider that are targeted at minority and immigrant business owners. Also, we think immigrant and minority business owners may have their own cultural organizations and may be seeking services from them before turning to the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. So, we will work with the Chamber with research containing relevant community leaders and groups to help the Chamber build trust and partner with these communities.

**b. Project Scope**

Work Area	In Scope	Out of Scope
Research	How other chambers of commerce market their services to immigrant and minority business owners.	Research targeting business owners who are non-immigrant or non-minority.
Research	Identify specific events for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce targeted at minority and immigrant business owners.	Events that are not targeted at immigrant or minority business owners.

Research	Immigrant and minority communities or organizations in Worcester.	Non-immigrant and non-minority communities or organizations.  Organizations outside of Worcester County, MA.
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**3. Change Management**

During the course of the project there will be a number of requests to modify the scope that is agreed to in this charter. If a change should be requested, it should go through the following process:

1. Provide an overview of the requested change
2. Provide an explanation of the reason for the request
3. Analysis of the impact of the change
  - a. Time changes
  - b. Resource changes
4. Recommendation to the major stakeholders for the course of action that should be taken.

No change should be executed unless approved by the stakeholders.

**4. Assumptions**

- There are many immigrant- or minority-owned businesses that would like to join the Chamber of Commerce but do not know how to do so.
- The Chamber of Commerce and its value can be understood by explaining appropriately to the business owners.
- All members of the project team will give their best effort to all assigned parts of the project.

**5. Constraints**

- Language barriers
- Cultural differences
- Limited resources and time available for the project

**6. Risks**

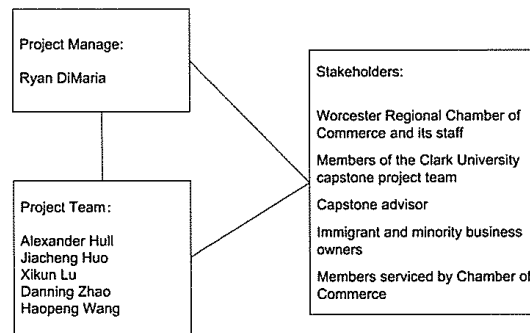
- Conflicts between stakeholders
- Lack of efficiency and cooperation in group

- Misunderstanding of deliverables
- Poor or inconsistent communication between group and stakeholders

**7. Communication Strategy**

- Using WhatsApp to text messages within the project group
- Creating a OneDrive folder to upload, create, and edit documents
- Using email to communicate with major stakeholders
- Meeting with capstone advisor regularly
- Weekly face-to-face group meetings to check up on research

**8. Project Structure**



**9. Stakeholder Commitments**

- Communication between stakeholders is expected to be honest, clear, and timely. If one stakeholder feels the communication is unclear, they will ask for clarification to prevent misunderstandings. For the purpose of this project, timely is defined as responding within three business days.
- Requests for project-related resources should be provided in a timely manner.
- The project team will keep up-to-date meeting notes and report project progress to Professor Aroian and the Chamber.

- The project team will give their best effort to complete the project with the support of the Chamber and Professor Aroian.

**10. Roles & Responsibilities/RASCI Chart**

The chart below identifies the main roles that the major stakeholders will play in completing this project.

	Project Team	Professor Richard Aroian	Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
Project charter including end state and scope	R	C	S
Project management and control	R	I	-
Project communication	R	I	R
Project planning	R	C	C
Problem identification and analysis	R	C	I
Problem resolution	R	C	I


- **Responsible (R):** The role that is responsible for completing the work.
- **Consulted (C):** The role that is consulted on and contributes to the completion of the work.
- **Informed (I):** The role that receives the output of the work and receives status reports on the progress of the work.
- **Sign-Off (S):** The role that is expected to approve the work.

**11. Measures of Success**

<b>Project Performance Dimensions by Project Success Factor</b>	
<b>Project Outcomes</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>
<b>Client Success</b>	<p>The Chamber is satisfied with the outcome of the project.</p> <p>Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce uses deliverables produced.</p> <p>The Chamber's needs are addressed.</p> <p>Able to better provide business services to minority and immigrant owned businesses in Worcester.</p>
<b>Organization's Future</b>	<p>Increased membership for Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.</p>
<b>Project Teams</b>	<p>Team members experience professional growth.</p> <p>Gain insight and useful skills in Project Management.</p> <p>Improve cooperation and teamwork skills.</p>
<b>Agreements</b>	<p>Team members meet schedule expectations.</p> <p>Project is completed by the deadline.</p> <p>Stakeholders communicate effectively and regularly throughout the project.</p> <p>Team members complete all assigned work to a high standard.</p>

**12. Stakeholder Sign-off**

This project charter has been signed off by the following stakeholders:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date 2/8/19

Karen Pelletier

Date

Vice President of Operations and Director of Education and Workforce Development  
Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Project Team Members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ryan DiMaria Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Alexander Hull Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jiancheng Hou Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Xikun Lu Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Haopeng Wang Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Danning Zhou Date





Appendix B

Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce PowerPoint Presentation

WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE



CLARK  
UNIVERSITY

Alex Hull, Ryan DiMaria, Jiacheng Hou, Danning Zhao, Haopeng  
Wang, Xikun Lu



## Table of Contents

- Background of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Purpose of the Project
- Goals of the Project
- Project Process
- Findings
  - Interviews
  - Case Studies
- Salient Issues Identified
- Recommendations for the Chamber
- Implications for Professional Development



## Background of the Chamber

- Located in Worcester, MA, often referred to as “the Heart of the Commonwealth”.
- Represent 2,300 members, from all industries and of all sizes.
- Advocate for favorable policies and legislation on important issues affecting the region’s businesses.





## Background of the Chamber

- A non-profit, member driven entity whose funding sources are membership dues, sponsorships, and program and event fees
- Services include:
  1. Networking opportunities through committees and events
  2. Sharing resources
  3. Free advertising
  4. Training for organization development
  5. Business assistance



## The Purpose of the Project

- Help the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce better understand and plan how to market their organization and services to attract businesses that are immigrant/minority owned.



## Goals of the Project

- Identify specific issues that have caused the disconnect between the immigrant/minority owned businesses and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.
- Research other local Chambers of Commerce to identify what types of marketing tactics and services they currently have that could be applied in Worcester.
- Recommend marketing tactics that will attract immigrant/minority business owners.



## Project Process: Interviews

- Ivette Olmeda, President of Main South Business Organization
- Connected with Robert Thomas, current President and COO of New Americans Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Talked with 15 small immigrant/minority owned businesses total.
- Approach was learning and listening...avoid soliciting for the Chamber.
- Based off the answers, identified salient themes and created specific marketing recommendations.



# Project Process: Interviews







# Project Process: Interviews





# Project Process: Interviews





# Project Process: Interviews





# Project Process: Interviews





## Project Outcomes: Interviews

- Lack of community involvement
- Intimidating
- Disconnected
- Busy schedules
- What is the value proposition?



## Project Process: Case Studies

- Looked at 8 chambers in cities/towns with similar demographics to Worcester, MA
- 2 Case studies:
  - Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
  - East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce







## Case Study 1: Boston, MA

	Boston, MA		Worcester, MA	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>685,094 (estimated 2017)</b>		<b>185,677 (Estimated 2017)</b>	
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	52.8%		57.1%	
Black or African American alone	25.3%		13.2%	
American Indian & Native Alaskan	0.4%		0.5%	
Asian alone	9.5%		7.3%	
2 or more races	4.9%		4.2%	
Hispanic or Latino	19.4%		20.9%	
<b>Foreign born persons</b>	<b>28.3%</b>		<b>21.1%</b>	
<b>Total Firms</b>	<b>59,268</b>		<b>13,085</b>	
Minority owned	17,686	<b>29.8%</b>	3,775	<b>28.9%</b>

## Case Study 1: Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce



- Established in 1909
- Recognized there was an opportunity to provide more valuable services to minority business owners and redesigned their mission and values to align with their new diversity initiatives
- Partner with small business community teams, support organizations, and other chambers, such as Haitian Chamber of Commerce and LGBT Chamber
- Pacesetters Program







## Case Study 1: Pacesetters Program

- Launched in 2018: Business-to-business program aimed at reducing economic inequalities
- 'Pacesetters'
  - Businesses committed to increasing their supplier diversity
  - Measure, report, and increase spending at local minority-owned businesses
  - Exchange best practices participate in the Chamber's matchmaking events and networking events.
- Priority Suppliers
  - Local, ethnic, minority owned businesses



## Case Study 1: Pacesetter Program's Four Goals

- **Contracts** – Increase the number of contracts and dollars spent among pacesetters and minority businesses.
- **Peer Learning** – Partnerships with large size companies
- **Data-Driven Sourcing** – Chamber's Committee on Economic Opportunity uses the data provided by Pacesetters to track progress and inform areas for diversifying spending.
- **Awareness** – Increase awareness of the benefits of increasing opportunities for minority businesses.



## Case Study 1: Pacesetters Program's Outcomes

- 13 new deals with small businesses, resulting in \$3 million in new revenue for priority suppliers.
- 70+ connections made at 3 networking and industry specific events.



## Case Study 2: East Brunswick, NJ

	East Brunswick, NJ		Worcester, MA	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>48,840 (estimated 2017)</b>		<b>185,677 (Estimated 2017)</b>	
<b>White alone, not Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>61%</b>		<b>57.1%</b>	
Black or African American alone	4.6%		13.2%	
American Indian & Native Alaskan	0.1%		0.5%	
Asian alone	25.6%		7.3%	
2 or more races	2.4%		4.2%	
Hispanic or Latino	7.5%		20.9%	
<b>Foreign born persons</b>	<b>33%</b>		<b>21.1%</b>	
<b>Total Firms</b>	<b>5,596</b>		<b>13,085</b>	
<b>Minority owned</b>	<b>1,674</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	<b>3,775</b>	<b>28.9%</b>



## Case Study 2: East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce

- Established in September 2017
- Located in one of the most diverse towns in the state of New Jersey
- Built the chamber to reflect the town's diversity

**East Brunswick**  
Regional  
*Chamber of Commerce*





## Case Study 2: East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce

- Do not track demographic statistics of members
  - Members reflects the diversity of East Brunswick
- Do not currently conduct any targeted marketing at any group of business owners
- EBRCC services
  - Reflect the diversity of East Brunswick and their members
  - Encourages community involvement



## Case Study 2: EBRCC



**APR 3** EB Business Forum: Grow Your Business in the Center of NJ  
Public - Hosted by Township of East Brunswick and East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce



## Salient Issues

- 1.) No sense of culture/community
- 2.) Never heard of the Chamber
- 3.) Concern/anxiety of "not fitting in"
- 4.) Misunderstood value proposition





## Recommendations: Marketing

- Market to the source
  - Create, collaborate, and host events that embrace and advocate the diversity of small businesses in Worcester.
  - Examples:
    - 1. Informational events (Held in University Park/YMCA catered by a local restaurant)
    - 2. Promote "shop local"
    - 3. Cultural pride celebration (International Business Advocacy Day)



## Recommendations: Programming

- Create Chamber programs focused on supporting minority and immigrant business owners.
- Three possible program models:
  1. Immigrant and minority small-business owner mentorship program.
  2. Business to business program inspired by the Pacesetters program.
  3. Targeted Chamber ambassador program.



## Conclusion

### Opportunity to:

- Create a diverse group of Chamber members
- Add value to a previously underserved community
- Support immigrant and minority business owners through Worcester's growth

## Implications for Professional Development



1. Cultural pride

2. Accountability of the community

"Constant dropping wears the big stone."

3. Surround yourself with connectors and gatekeepers

"Opening the door is half the battle"



## Acknowledgements

- Karen Pelletier
- Richard Aroian
- Joseph O'Brien
- Ivette Olmeda
- Robert Thomas

# QUESTIONS?



## Appendix C

## Interview Questions for Chambers of Commerce

1. Do you know what percentage of your membership base are minority and/or immigrant business owners?
2. Do you conduct any targeted marketing at minority/immigrant owned businesses?
3. What marketing strategies or programs have you found most effective at targeting minority/immigrant owned businesses?
4. What are some significant factors that make it difficult to integrate minority/immigrant owned businesses into the Chamber and its community?
5. Have you ever partnered with local cultural organizations to build relationships with immigrant and minority communities? If so, was it successful?
6. What kinds of services do you provide to minority/immigrant business owners for improving their leadership, management, and business skills? Have you found that these programs are useful for minority/immigrant business owners?

## Appendix D

### Sample Marketing Material for a Targeted Chamber Ambassador Program

#### *Program Description:*

Are you an enthusiastic, friendly immigrant or minority Chamber member? Are you seeking more opportunity and want to enhance the quality of life for community? Are you looking to get more involved in the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce? Become a Chamber Ambassador as part of our new Community Ambassador Program!

#### *What is a Chamber Community Ambassador?*

Ambassadors are an enthusiastic, friendly, and highly visible group of individuals who volunteer their time to assist and promote the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and its affiliate chambers. Community Ambassadors represents the immigrant and minority business owners and help Chamber maintain a two-way communication link between the Chamber and your community. Ambassadors promote membership retention, recruit new members, and additionally serve as the official “greeters” at monthly programs and events, thereby assisting in welcoming new members to the Chamber. During our event, we will also select a Board and a staff to become Community ambassadors, and they will work with you together to improve your business and enhance the quality of life for your community.

#### *What are the benefits?*

Becoming a Community Ambassador will expand your professional network and visibility and give you the opportunity to network with Ambassador team members. Second, you will have the opportunity to meet and network with current and prospective members at a variety of Chamber



events. In addition, Community Ambassadors will receive free admission to Business After Hours events. Finally, your business can earn a free membership for the ensuing membership year if you secure five new paid memberships within a calendar year.

*What are the Expectations?*

You will be committed to the Ambassador Committee for one full year. Ambassadors must attend at least 6 monthly committee meetings. In addition, you should stay well informed about Chamber events, functions, benefits, policies, etc. In addition, you will contact new and potential Chamber members from immigrant or minority communities by phone to welcome them, answer any questions they have, and help them understand how to utilize their Chamber membership. Moreover, you will volunteer to assist at Chamber events and functions.