

Greater Louisville Inc.

Overview

Greater Louisville Inc. (GLI) is the metropolitan chamber of commerce and economic development agency for the Louisville, Kentucky-Southern Indiana metropolitan area. In September 1997, GLI was formed through the merger of the Greater Louisville Economic Development Partnership and the Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce. In 1998, GLI also then accepted responsibility for some of the economic development activities that had been carried out by the city and county — business retention and expansion.

Today, the mission of GLI is to help its members and the community grow and prosper. GLI gauges its success in achieving its mission using three measures — growth of metro area population and employment; improvement in per capital income; and growth of chamber membership.

One of the major goals of GLI is to transform the greater Louisville area into one of the leading economic regions in the country.

Regional Priorities

Although the Greater Louisville area is faced with many regional challenges and issues about which the business community is concerned with solving, there are two main issues that are currently high priorities for the business community: workforce development and taxes. The leadership at GLI is concerned with workforce development because the Greater Louisville area does not have enough skilled workers and talent to fill jobs that are available, especially in knowledge-based industries. The business community strongly believes that an inadequate supply of talent and skilled workers could potentially hurt the region's economic competitiveness and slow down growth in the knowledge-based sectors. Therefore, attracting talented workers to the region and increasing the skills of local workers is a major priority for GLI.

GLI has launched several efforts to attract talent to the region. It recently emailed over 40,000 people that were either born or raised in Kentucky to spread awareness of opportunities in the state, especially within Greater Louisville. GLI also has traveled

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Type of Organization

Multi-sector: Led by partnership of business, government, civic, community and other leaders

Unit of Membership

Company/organization

Number of Members

2003: 2,300

1998: 2,100

Membership by Company Size

Small Companies: 55%

Mid-sized Companies: 33%

Large Companies: 12%

Dues Determined by

Number of company employees

Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: \$10,000

Smallest Member Companies: \$600

Annual Operating Budget

2003: \$5 million or more

1998: \$5 million or more

Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 65

1998: 67

Board Members

2003: 22

Regional Priorities

Tax Structure; Workforce Development; Creation of New Ventures; Creation of an Information Technology Infrastructure; Economic Development; Supporting of Minority-Owned Enterprises

BULLDOGS IN THE BLUEGRASS

Bulldogs in the Bluegrass is a summer internship program designed to bring approximately 28 Yale University students to the Greater Louisville area for the summer to work. The program, sponsored by the Yale Club of Kentucky and started by GLI, is now in its sixth year.

The program has served over 170 Yale undergraduates who have interned at nonprofit community-based agencies to private financial services companies. The mission of the program is to introduce these students to the assets and leadership of the Louisville community as well as provide benefits to local employers and the community at large.

For more information, visit www.bulldogsinthebluegrass.com

around the U.S. hosting “homecoming parties” to invite highly skilled workers to move to the area. So far, GLI has held homecoming parties in Atlanta, but plans to visit Chicago and the Northern California Bay Area. In addition, to reach out to young professionals, GLI has created a Young Professionals Association of Louisville and has reserved a seat on its Board of Directors for a representative of this group. GLI hopes that this will foster a new generation of young leaders who will stay living and working in Louisville.

Another priority among the leadership at GLI is the cost of taxes for businesses and individuals. Business leaders are concerned that the tax rate is higher in Louisville than in other cities, especially among competitor cities, because its taxes go to subsidize industries in other parts of Kentucky. If Louisville continues to generate more tax revenue than it gets back from the state, business leaders are worried that this will limit the amount of revenue that Louisville has for city services, infrastructure, education, etc. There is widespread concern that a high tax rate will make it difficult for the region’s businesses to compete with other regions and/or attract new businesses to the area. As a result, Greater Louisville Inc. has made tax reform a high priority.

Structure and Operations

Greater Louisville Inc. has 65 full-time staff members and 22 Board Members who are responsible for various tasks, activities, projects and initiatives. Despite the recent downturn in the U.S. economy, GLI has maintained a relatively steady number of staff members between 1998 and 2003. GLI has also been able to maintain a hefty annual budget of more than \$5 million over the last five years, helping the organization to carry out its mission and engage in new projects and initiatives. Part of GLI’s success has been its ability to increase membership from 2,100 in 1998 to 2,300 today. GLI’s membership consists primarily of small companies (55%). Only 12% of its membership base is comprised of large companies.