

## W.A.C.E. Awards Applications Go Online

W.A.C.E. has announced a major enhancement to its annual awards application process. For the first time ever, members will be able to submit their applications electronically via the "Apply by Survey Monkey" platform.

The change is a part of the association's continuous commitment to make processes more efficient, user-friendly, and convenient for its membership.

### Response to Feedback

Over the years, W.A.C.E. has listened to member feedback about its awards application process. While the traditional methods have served the association well, it acknowledges that the world is rapidly digitalizing. The benefits of introducing the option for electronic submissions:

- **Convenience:** Members can apply from anywhere, any-time before the deadline.
- **Efficiency:** Electronic applications eliminate the need for paper, postage, and manual handling, ensuring that your application gets to us directly.
- **Environmentally Friendly:** By reducing the need for printed materials, W.A.C.E. is taking a small but significant step toward sustainability.

### How to Apply Electronically

#### 1. Visit the W.A.C.E.

**Awards Page:** All information about the various awards, criteria, and the application process is detailed on the website at [WACE Awards Entry Forms](#).

**2. All 15 application opportunities are listed:** Click

more to view full details for each application. Click apply to begin the application process.

**3. Set up your account.** A name and email address is all that is required. You will then be able to view status of applications, download copies and complete all future applications in one convenient location.

**4. Fill out the Application:** The platform is intuitive and user-friendly, guiding the applicant through each step.

**5. Submit:** Once done, hit submit, and the application will reach W.A.C.E. instantly.

**All judging will take place within the application platform so all applications must be submitted via the electronic system in order to be eligible.**

tion deadline for all opportunities is November 13, 2023. Please mark your calendars and adhere to the submission deadlines. Late applications will not be accepted.

### Feedback is Welcome!

W.A.C.E. staff is eager to hear about users' experience with this new application process. Applicants' insights will be valuable in making future improvements.

This is yet another step toward modernizing and improving W.A.C.E. operations for the benefit of all members. We encourage everyone to take advantage of this new feature, and eagerly await the award applications!

### Important Dates

Don't miss out! The applica-

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*Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and not W.A.C.E.*

# #10

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Western Association  
of Chamber Executives  
**FOUNDATION**

**Thank you W.A.C.E. Foundation  
for all you do for our members!**

WRITTEN WITH AI ASSISTANCE

# Unlocking Power of Artificial Intelligence: Insights from Recent W.A.C.E. Webinar



Nick Ortiz



Zeb Welborn, ACE

The Western Association of Chamber Executives recently hosted an enlightening webinar that delved into the world of artificial intelligence (AI) and its application in local chambers of commerce. Hosted by Nick Ortiz, the event featured Zeb Welborn, who earned the association's Executive of the Year award in 2023. Welborn is seen as a leader in the industry, for his pioneering work in integrating AI into the operations of chambers of commerce.

## The Rise of AI

Welborn kicked off the webinar by highlighting the astounding growth of AI tools in recent times. He cited the example of **ChatGPT**, a machine-learning platform

that reached 100 million users within just two months of its launch. This rapid adoption of AI is indicative of its growing significance in the business world. In fact, in 2022, \$92 billion was invested in AI, underscoring its potential to reshape industries and economies.

## AI's Impact on Employment

One compelling aspect discussed during the webinar was the potential impact of AI on employment. Predictions suggest that by 2027, AI could lead to a net growth of 69 million jobs. Rather than being a job killer, AI appears to be a powerful tool for augmenting human capabilities and productivity.

## Practical Applications

The heart of the webinar showcased practical examples of AI tools in action. Welborn demonstrated how tools like **ChatGPT** could be harnessed for tasks such as drafting emails, generating content, and even creating imagery. He emphasized that the key to success with AI-generated content lies in making it sound genuine and personalized.

One fascinating tool highlighted during the session

was **Synthesia**, an AI platform capable of generating lifelike videos of a person reading a script. This technology opens new possibilities for creating engaging video content quickly and efficiently.

## AI's Diverse Applications

Welborn encouraged attendees to think beyond traditional use cases and consider AI's potential in diverse areas, including music creation, health monitoring, and various business applications. The message was clear: AI can be a versatile solution for tackling problems, creating innovative solutions, and streamlining routine tasks.

## Efficiency Through Proper Prompting

One key takeaway from the webinar was the importance of proper prompting when using AI tools. By providing clear instructions, AI can yield more accurate and valuable results. Welborn illustrated this with examples ranging from creating presentations and responding to emails to even writing chapters of a story.

## Cost-Effective AI

Despite their immense

potential, many AI tools, like **ChatGPT**, are relatively inexpensive, especially when considering their potential utility. Welborn highlighted these tools' cost-effectiveness, which makes them accessible to chambers of commerce of all sizes.

The webinar concluded with an engaging Q&A session, during which Welborn fielded questions about AI tool costs, their functionalities, and how best to utilize them in the context of local chambers of commerce.

In an increasingly AI-driven world, this webinar served as a valuable resource for chamber executives looking to harness the power of artificial intelligence to enhance their operations, provide more personalized services, and drive innovation.

For more information on the webinar series and the upcoming sessions, please visit [waceonline.com](http://waceonline.com).

*Disclaimer: Nick Ortiz edited and added to this article, but the core of it was produced through asking **ChatGPT** to write a newsletter article summarizing the webinar. Ortiz used a **ChatGPT** extension to create a summary of the video and then asked the program to write an article based on that summary.*

## CHAIRMAN'S CIRCLE

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The Chairman's Circle is a special group of members that have committed to support W.A.C.E. through sponsorships. If your business would like to become a member of the Chairman's Circle, please contact W.A.C.E. staff at (916) 442-2223 or email [wace@calchamber.com](mailto:wace@calchamber.com).

## LEADER TO LEADER

# Post-COVID Turmoil, Communicating Value, Politics, Continue as Chamber Challenges

*What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the chamber industry today, and how do you see us overcoming them?*



**Sherry Menor-McNamara**  
President/CEO  
Chamber of Commerce  
Hawaii

A big challenge facing the chamber industry today includes understanding the unique needs of your business community and pivoting the business model to serve those needs.

Demonstrating and selling the value of the organization to potential members looks different now than it did before the pandemic. It was hard for the chamber industry to navigate because our value shifted from providing opportunities to connect to providing critical information about resources to keep businesses afloat.

Businesses are still recovering from the pandemic and the resulting economic pinch. While networking and events are important, many new members join because chambers can facilitate grant funding opportunities, take the lead on community initiatives

and advocate for policy reforms at the county, state and federal levels that allow businesses room to grow.

The way chambers can solidify their value today is by enhancing advocacy efforts and by establishing themselves as resources and leaders in their communities.



**John Tayer**  
President/CEO  
Boulder (CO) Chamber

In the spirit of the three C's chamber model, the biggest challenge for our industry is fully grasping the true nature of our evolving economy in this post-COVID period.

Along those lines, we should be pursuing a holistic understanding of this "new normal," and the implications for our local businesses and communities, through thorough research and analysis.

Armed with that information, we can begin leading the process of stakeholder engagement to devise and implement strategies that build future economic resilience. This is the imperative role chambers must play to sustain the vitality of our communities and industry.



**Jake Mangas**  
President/CEO  
Redding (CA) Chamber

As chamber of commerce leaders we are called upon to represent business interests with government. Sometimes that means taking an active role in local politics.

To me, one of the greater challenges facing chambers is to not allow our "voice" to be silenced by people willing to shout the loudest. It's time to think strategically.

We have chosen as a chamber to start advocating by educating. We no longer endorse candidates and fund campaigns; instead, we bring the candidates to the business community through forums that ask questions influenced by our members.

We must not act out of fear, but out of the realization that in these divisive times when emotions can take over city and county meetings, we need to be active listeners and respond with data and facts on issues of importance to our business community.

Delight in the sane middle!



**Jessica Viera, IOM**  
CEO  
Greater Wasilla (AK) Chamber

The chamber industry grapples with several significant challenges today, with economic uncertainty and workforce issues taking the forefront.

The ongoing volatility in the business environment, particularly in the wake of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, poses a substantial obstacle for businesses in their pursuit of effective planning and strategy. The rapidly evolving nature of work demands new skills and competencies, making workforce development and engagement critical concerns.

Chambers cannot afford to maintain the status quo; they must adapt to these evolving challenges. This involves diversifying their service offerings and crafting a comprehensive package that encompasses networking opportunities, educational programs and proactive advocacy initiatives.

Such a multifaceted approach not only benefits members but also fosters their active engagement within the chamber and community.

*See Leader to Leader: Page 6*



# Non-Dues Income Survey

The full survey report can be downloaded on the members only page at [www.waceonline.com](http://www.waceonline.com)

**46%**

Average percentage of budget that non-dues revenue accounts for

**\$69,062**

Average NET from largest single source of non-dues revenue

Greatest potential for additional income in the next couple of years:

1. Sponsorships (52%)
2. Special Events (44%)
3. Grants (31%)

**48%**

charge a membership application fee for new members

Application Fees

Average: \$36  
Highest: \$100  
Lowest: \$5



## NOTEWORTHY

# What Chambers Are Doing Around the West

## Hawaii Holds Future of Work Conference

In partnership with the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and Workforce Development Council, the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is holding its inaugural Future of Work conference.

The conference features workforce insights and forecasts from leaders in Hawaii's top seven employment sectors, including tourism, defense, construction, health care, technology, energy and the public sector.

Attendees will hear from dynamic speakers in each sector as they present in-demand occupations and forecast their growth potential and projected workforce development needs in 2024. The event will also feature an economic forecast.

This new annual event aims to convene leaders and influencers while providing an integrated approach to sharing job outlook information across major employment sectors in Hawaii. The event has in-person and virtual attendee options.

Find out more at <https://business.cochawaii.org/events/details/future-of-work-2024-1114392>.

## Parker Chamber Debuts New Women's Leadership Program

The Parker (CO) Chamber is excited to announce the launch of an exciting new 10-month leadership development program specially designed to help professional women "achieve more, do more, and earn more!" The Women's Experience will provide top-notch professional development training for a select group of 15–20 women starting in January 2024.

Training topics will include Resilience: Dealing with Crisis and Conflict; Sales & Presentation Skills; Setting Professional Boundaries; Boosting Professional Confidence; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Mental



Health, Burnout, and Stress Management; Setting Professional Goals & Action Plans; Mastering Change and Career Shifts; and Mentorship and Feedback.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Parker Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, this program is free to the participants. Participants will also be required to raise funds to sponsor a woman for the 2025 class as well as agreeing to mentor future classes.

Find out all the details and watch the video at [www.parkerchamber.com/we/](http://www.parkerchamber.com/we/).

## Eugene Chamber Hosts New Community Solutions Summit

A local business community is only as strong as the ecosystems of support that exist to promote a healthy

economy. These ecosystems might include available and affordable housing, a trained and ready workforce, strong and equitable public safety systems, or access to mental health services.

The Eugene Area (OR) Chamber is providing opportunities for local business leaders to learn about these ecosystems, their impacts on the local economy, and opportunities for leadership to right the course. With this in mind, the chamber hosted a Community Solutions Summit.

This new event will be held annually and will focus on different advocacy or community development topics that are affecting the Eugene business climate.

This year's event focused on the homeless, housing and public safety challenges facing the community — and how the chamber and broader business community can help to drive solutions.

To learn more about the event, check out <https://web.eugenechamber.com/events/2023-Community-Solutions-Summit-2319837/details>.

## Billings Chamber Launches New Tourism Ambassador Program

The Billings (MT) Chamber's new Tourism Ambassador Program is a multifaceted program that serves to increase tourism

by inspiring front-line employees, volunteers, and citizens to turn every visitor encounter into a positive experience elevating customer service and connection within their city. When visitors have a positive experience, they are more likely to return in the future and share that experience with others.

The certification program requires participants to attend training, complete required readings and assignments, and pass an open-book examination.

At completion, participants receive the official CTA designation on behalf of the Tourism Ambassador Institute. Training modules include: The Power of Tourism; Discovering Montana's Trailhead; Knowing, Finding, Using Resources; and Exceeding Customer Expectations.

Want to know more? For full details, visit [https://www.billingschamber.com/media/CTA-Program\\_One-Page\\_Update-1.pdf](https://www.billingschamber.com/media/CTA-Program_One-Page_Update-1.pdf).

## Are We on Your Mailing list?

Information featured each month in Around the West is taken from chamber newsletters and websites that W.A.C.E. receives from its members. We try to share best practices, innovative ideas and programs from chambers working hard to be Catalysts, Conveners and Champions and make a difference in their community. Make sure to subscribe W.A.C.E. to your mailing list, if you haven't done so already, and you may be featured in a future *Insider*!

Send e-newsletters to: [jennifer.johnson@calchamber.com](mailto:jennifer.johnson@calchamber.com).

Send mailings to: W.A.C.E., P.O. Box 1736, Sacramento, CA 95812-1736.

## Leader to Leader

From Page 3



**Alicia Main**  
Executive Director  
Carson Valley (NV) Chamber

The biggest challenge facing chambers today is the changing business environment post-COVID and the difficult economic headwinds concerning investment and capital. Both these issues are compounding to make it more difficult for existing members to retain their membership and for new members to devote resources to chamber functions.

Now more than ever chamber events and services must be relevant to the membership and provide value to members. Embracing new and emerging technologies or processes is key to keeping chambers relevant. Fostering communication through networking and events which share this quality information provides value to the membership, ensuring the chamber is a useful resource to our business community.

## MEETING DATES

W.A.C.E. Events  
(916) 442-2223  
[www.waceonline.com](http://www.waceonline.com)

### Webinar Series

- **November 8:** Unleash Your Inner Marketing Genius: Mastering Digital Strategies for Chamber Engagement
- **December 6:** Combating Homelessness in Your Community

All webinars take place from 10 a.m.-11 a.m. (Pacific).

**Registration and more information.**

### 2024 Annual Conference

February 7-9, 2024  
Hyatt Regency Orange County  
Garden Grove, CA

**Sponsorship Opportunities**

## Chamber Executives in the News

The Aurora (CO) Chamber has selected **Naomi Colwell** as their new president/CEO. Colwell has been serving the chamber as interim president/CEO since July and previously served as the chamber's director of finance. Colwell succeeds **Kevin Hougén**, who retired after 28 years of service.

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