

2017 STRATEGIC PLAN



Baton Rouge Area Chamber®



#thinkBR

This document is organized according to BRAC's four goals that make up the organization's five-year plan, and outlines specific objectives under each goal that will be the focus of 2017, the second year of the plan. These activities are those most critical to the Baton Rouge Area's economic future as identified by BRAC's issue councils, investor feedback and research of best practices.

THE FOUR GOALS:

GROW AND
DIVERSIFY THE
BATON ROUGE
AREA ECONOMY

CULTIVATE THE
REGION'S TALENT

TRANSFORM THE
BATON ROUGE AREA'S
QUALITY
OF LIFE

ELEVATE THE
REGION'S
EXTERNAL IMAGE

In 2017, BRAC will focus on five flagship tactics. These tactics have been identified as having the most potential to further the goals of the strategic plan.

1. Secure passage of transportation funding to fund regional megaprojects
2. Secure funding for an external image campaign
3. Increase push to secure more new jobs from existing regional businesses
4. Secure funding for the EBR Redevelopment Authority (RDA)
5. Push for the creation of a flood recovery initiative for small business



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GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE BATON ROUGE ECONOMY

ALIGN AND DEEPEN BRAC'S TARGETED BUSINESS RETENTION, ATTRACTION AND SMALL BUSINESS APPROACHES

BRAC will grow and diversify the Capital Region economy through effective project management, direct marketing and support services to local businesses and targeted industry executives. In this pursuit, BRAC will deliver value-added support to existing companies and pitch the region's value proposition to new companies.

Partnering with the Governor's Restore Louisiana task force, local governments, and regional partners, BRAC will support flood recovery efforts, especially resources responsive to small business recovery needs.

PROMOTE MAJOR ASSETS FOR DIVERSIFICATION AND COMPETITIVENESS

BRAC will aggressively promote the Capital Region's most valuable assets to maximize their success and economic contributions. Through comprehensive planning and strategy execution, BRAC will market opportunities for business partnerships and/or collaborations at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Louisiana State University, Southern University and The Water Campus.

Additionally, BRAC will track and support the development of a water cluster and new medical school.

ACCELERATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, HIGH-GROWTH FIRMS AND BUSINESS INNOVATION

Working with regional higher education institutions, BRAC will secure the launch of revived and expanded Small Business Development Center services to help the startup and growth of small businesses in the Capital Region. BRAC will work aggressively to develop a strategy to address the critical demand for access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs, and seek legislative passage of a reinstated, functional research and development tax incentive.



CONTINUALLY ENHANCE THE REGION'S BUSINESS CLIMATE

In the context of strained state government finances and the expected push for comprehensive fiscal reform, BRAC will defend the importance of robust economic growth through the utilization of economic development incentives, protecting the core "toolkit" of effective programs like Quality Jobs, Enterprise Zone, Digital Media, Angel Investor, and Research and Development. BRAC will also seek to secure sufficient, sustainable funding for economic development efforts at the state and local level.

BRAC will work with parish partners in educating authorizing bodies and streamlining the process of approving the Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP). Additionally, BRAC will assist in the certification of two small sites (<25 acres) and one large site to enhance the regions ability to win projects.

CULTIVATE THE REGION'S TALENT

EXPAND STEM LEARNING AND PARTNERSHIPS IN PK-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION

Demand for workers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) continues to grow, presenting opportunities for businesses and young people with the training to obtain those jobs. In 2017, BRAC will increase K-12 business-to-school partnerships in the Capital Region through BRAC's Virtual Schoolhouse. The Virtual Schoolhouse connects Baton Rouge Area professionals to Baton Rouge Area classrooms for guest speaking, project panels, virtual field trips, and other important work-based learning opportunities.

BRAC will also facilitate connecting a third cohort of Capital Region teachers to STEM industries by continuing its successful externship program for an additional year.

Additionally, BRAC will work with the state Department of Education and regional school districts on efforts to improve the quality of and expand access to computer science course offerings for high school students.

ALIGN REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS TO MEET BUSINESS NEEDS

With the continuing economic growth occurring in the Capital Region, BRAC is focused on ensuring businesses have the skilled workforce necessary, and that area workers have sufficient training to take advantage of new and better job opportunities. BRAC will promote and work to secure business partnerships in collaboration with Baton Rouge Community College and/or River Parishes Community College campuses, focused on customized workforce services. BRAC will continue the work established in 2016 — to review and submit actionable feedback for the state's regional workforce occupational forecasts for the Capital Region.

BRAC, in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Education, developed the Micro-Enterprise Credential to foster the soft skills and characteristics necessary for success in the small business world. BRAC's work with the Credential in 2017 will be twofold:

1. develop an approved Advanced Micro-Enterprise Credential that teaches a higher level of soft skills and the foundational business and administrative skills needed for successful entrepreneurialism, and
2. work to expand the number of Capital Area districts offering the Micro-Enterprise Credential to their students.

BRAC will also research and develop strategies to increase training and education attainment levels for the large number of Capital Region residents that have achieved a high school diploma but no postsecondary credentials or degrees, to assist filling critical and high-demand workforce gaps.

The more exposure students have to the world of work before graduation, the better prepared they will be upon starting their careers. Working with education and workforce development stakeholders, BRAC will explore opportunities for secondary students to participate in meaningful career training, such as expanded use of apprenticeships, internships, and virtual workplace experiences.



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ATTRACT AND RETAIN TOP TALENT THAT SUPPORT BRAC'S TARGETED BUSINESS SECTORS

Across the country, businesses and fast-growing metros are experiencing what is characterized as a “war for talent.” Baton Rouge Area business leaders are concerned about finding and retaining qualified employees, and emerging talent is looking for growth opportunities in vibrant, diverse communities. BRAC’s Talent Development Program will continue to support regional employers by showcasing to potential and current talent the many reasons why the Capital Region is an ideal place to call home. Initiatives such as customized executive candidate tours, regional familiarization presentations and a comprehensive in-market media campaign will seek to crystalize the value of Baton Rouge as city in which to locate for personal and professional reasons.

PROMOTE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The nation’s top-performing metros are generally recognized for vibrant economies, quality of life, distinctive brand identity and inclusiveness. In the wake of racial tensions that impacted Baton Rouge in 2016, and in support of BRAC’s aspirations to create an open dialogue on issues related to diversity and inclusion in the Baton Rouge Area, BRAC will promote a definition and business case for diversity and inclusion developed by its Diversity and Inclusion Committee in 2016. Following BRAC’s Signature Speaker event in 2016, BRAC will host a second annual “diversity in business” event with expanded topic areas. BRAC will also partner with and support the work of the Urban Congress on African American Males in advance of important policy improvement areas.



TRANSFORM THE BATON ROUGE AREA'S QUALITY OF LIFE

ACT AS A CHANGE AGENT ON MAJOR INITIATIVES AND POLICY REFORMS THAT ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

BRAC has positioned itself as a prominent voice and champion of sound public policy solutions – through the production of research reports, timely public policy commentaries, and coalition building – to enhance the region's quality of life, and by extension, improving the business climate to produce increased economic growth. In 2017, BRAC will continue to expand those efforts by also working to secure sustainable funding for the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, and partnering with other business groups across the state to advocate for criminal justice reform.

CHAMPION SWIFT TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC SOLUTIONS

Through its partnership with the Capital Region Industry for Sustainable Infrastructure Solutions, or CRISIS coalition, a regionally balanced, business-led coalition that BRAC helped to found in 2015 to provide a leadership voice to address the Baton Rouge Area's transportation crisis, 2016 saw important accomplishments. However, there is significantly more work to do to alleviate traffic in a region ranked third-worst in the nation for congestion. In 2017, BRAC will work to secure legislative passage and gubernatorial approval of major funding for one or more mega-projects for congestion relief, as well as a funding solution to provide additional annual funding toward Louisiana's transportation backlog. BRAC will also work through CRISIS and in partnership with the Capital Region Planning Commission to complete a regional transportation mobility strategy.

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IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES IN THE BATON ROUGE AREA

Because the Capital Region's economic success hinges on the strength of an educated workforce, BRAC has long been a strong champion for effective educational achievement and expanded quality choices for parents and students, through advocacy of statewide reforms and local strategic initiatives, particularly in East Baton Rouge Parish. Toward that end, in 2017 BRAC will work with area leaders, non-profits, and stakeholders to secure commitments to launch new or redeveloped schools, particularly in underserved areas. BRAC will also advocate for strategies to increase public school performance in East Baton Rouge and for protecting PK–12 education reforms at the state level.



ADVOCATE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL QUALITY OF PLACE INITIATIVES

An important subset of any region's quality of life is quality of place itself – that is, the attractiveness of its built and natural environment, with unique features and destinations that add value to life, work and play, and the economic opportunities those create. In 2017, BRAC will engage in a series of initiatives to improve quality of place in the Capital Region. This will include a broad public education campaign to highlight the importance of this issue – primarily litter and property upkeep issues – in an effort to change behavior. It will also include engaging with the new East Baton Rouge mayor-president and the metro council to fully fund and staff the EBR Redevelopment Authority (RDA) so that blighted commercial and residential properties can be revived and put back into productive use. At the same time, BRAC will advocate for investment in complete streets amenities, such as sidewalks and multi-use trails, and other streetscape improvements for signature corridors. These developments have shown to have high returns on investment, and create powerful visual impacts for visitors and residents alike, improving the perception of our community.

ELEVATE THE REGION'S EXTERNAL IMAGE

ARTICULATE THE BATON ROUGE AREA'S VALUE TO BUSINESS AND TALENT

Evolving from the third-party market research conducted in early 2016, and adjusting for the negative press surrounding the events of the summer of 2016, a coordinated, multi-year strategy will be finalized to tackle creating awareness and positive association of the region in external audiences. Authentic messaging developed in conjunction with BRAC's in-market campaign will set the groundwork for the launch of a broader external campaign that will carry through the completion of the Think Bigger campaign in 2020.

EXECUTE A SUSTAINED MEDIA RELATIONS STRATEGY TO TARGETED AUDIENCES

The Baton Rouge Area experienced a series of tragedies in the summer of 2016 that launched it into the national spotlight. Accordingly, BRAC will seek to develop a media strategy to highlight the recovery and renaissance of the region, including the packaging and pitching of stories to national publications around the anniversaries of the summer's events. To support a consistent, positive national presence, BRAC will identify and secure funding for an aggressive national marketing campaign. Within the state, BRAC will seek to secure favorable stories about the region, its economy, quality of life, and opportunities for talent and business growth.

ADVANCE FORMAL SUPER-REGIONAL EFFORTS

BRAC will continue to work collaboratively with members of the Southeast Super Region to advance the collective strategy for continued economic growth. In 2017, BRAC will work with its partners to develop a funding strategy to move forward on the intercity rail project.

