LOUISIANA COMMUNITY NETWORK

Business Retention & Expansion - Appendices

Business Retention and Expansion Appendices

APPENDIX A

Questions to guide the identification and selection of BRE Program partners

- What kinds of partners are available?
- What partnerships have you already formed to encourage economic development in your community?
- What does the partner bring to the table?
- What level of partnership or collaboration is appropriate?
- Should a partnership agreement be drafted to confirm specifics of the partnership?
- What can the BRE program do to be a good partner and collaborator itself?
- How do you maintain and ensure the effectiveness of these partnerships?
- Do you use partnerships to combine resources (more than information sharing and networking)?
- How do you leverage your resources?

APPENDIX B

Components of a Business Visitation Process

Train for Business Visits
Athletic teams are successful if they recruit good team players, have a plan for winning, and train to carry out that plan. A successful business visitation program can be viewed in the same way: recruit the best people for participating in the visit, know in advance what the visitors are to accomplish and why, and train the visitors in the techniques of successful interviews. A training session for business visitors does not have to be a long or difficult process. The elements of a successful visit can be conveyed in a three-hour mandatory training session for everyone participating in the interview process. A typical survey training program has at least the following six components (Loveridge and Morse, 1998):

1) An explanation of the survey's purpose.
2) An explanation of the interview team's role.
3) A detailed review of the survey instrument.
4) Assignment of the teams to businesses for the actual interviews.
5) Training on interviewing and note-taking techniques.
6) A practice interview.

Component 1 - Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of a business survey must be established before a visitation program is initiated. The purpose of the survey should guide the development of the survey questions, and a purpose statement should be included in the survey instrument used in the interview process. Two-person teams visiting businesses should be familiar with the purpose of the survey so that they both understand why they are conducting the interview and can explain the benefits of participating in the interview. The following are some typical purpose statements:

- Demonstrate the community's appreciation for its existing businesses.
- Identify immediate problems facing a business so these problems can be addressed.
- Identify perceptions of the community as a place to do business.
- Identify the training and technical assistance needs of the business.
- Identify the future plans of a business.
- Build community capacity for sustained growth and development.

Component 2 - Role of the Interview Team

Simply put, the role of the interview team is to collect data and return that data to the local EDO for follow-up action. Though interviewing sounds like a simple task, a successful interview is the core of a project's success, and the importance of the interviewer/note-taker in the process should not be underestimated or taken lightly. An interviewer (or note-taker) who is unclear about or unsure of his role or who is not committed to the success of the project damages the credibility of the program and jeopardizes the overall chances of its successful completion. The team is responsible for knowing the survey and its purpose, understanding the answers provided by the business owners/operators, and identifying any potential areas of concern (sometimes called red flags) that should be addressed immediately by the Economic Development Organization.

Component 3 - Review the Survey Instrument

Business visitation training is not complete until the teams have been introduced to the survey instrument. Both members of the team must understand the intent of each question and know how each question fits into the overall survey and helps to achieve one or more of the stated purposes of the survey. Familiarity with the survey's purpose, question types, and answer formats helps the interviewers to accurately administer the survey. A detailed review of the survey instrument in a group setting allows team members to ask their own questions and to learn from the questions of others about the content and intent of the survey.

Component 4 - Assign Teams to Businesses for the Actual Interviews

Deciding which team visits a particular business is a local decision that varies from community to community. Teams can choose the businesses they wish to visit, the program coordinator can make the choice, or a combination of the two approaches can be used. Addressing the following questions can help determine the appropriate approach for your program:

- What, if any, has been the past practice?
- What does the business owner/operator expect? (If the business owner/operator is used to seeing an economic development professional, then the team should use paid staff.)
- Should you allow interviewers to visit like businesses (competitors)?
- Does the interviewer see the visit as an opportunity for personal gain?
- Are the interview teams capable of and willing to make cold calls on businesses to set up interviews?
- Which approach is easiest from a project management perspective?

As a rule of thumb, visits, including travel time, take approximately two hours to complete. If the visits are part of the assigned duties of the team, then there is no practical reason, except for other responsibilities, to limit the number of assigned businesses. If, however, the teams are volunteers, it may be advisable to limit the number of assigned businesses to four or less. This equates to donating one work day to the project.

Component 5 - Interviewing and Note-taking Techniques

Everyone involved in business visits should be required to attend at least one visitation training session. The purpose of the session is to familiarize the participants with the program, their role in the process, and information on good interviewing and note-taking techniques. Prior to training, each participant should be given a packet of materials containing:

- Background on the project and survey purpose.
- Initial contact script.
- Guidelines for successful visits.
- A copy of any correspondence with the firms to be visited.
- A visitation checklist.
- The names and contact information for the assigned firms.
- The survey instrument.

The project background and survey's purpose should clearly and concisely identify the survey sponsor or sponsors, why the survey is being conducted (the purpose statement), the intended use of the survey results, how the data will be presented, and any guidelines for the survey respondent. The confidential nature of the process must be stressed.

If the visitation team will be scheduling the business interview directly with the business owner/operator, it is useful to prepare a script for use in the initial contact. It should be stressed that the script should serve as a guide for the conversation and *should not* be read verbatim. The script should contain a brief statement on the project background. The confidential nature of the process should be included in the script, as well as any "rules" for conducting the interview. A common rule for interviews is called the "skip it" rule, which tells the business owner/operator that he may choose not to answer any question without providing a reason for non-response. This initial contact script can also be used again at the start of the formal interview process during the visit. There should be guidelines for the two-person team for before the visit, during the visit, and after the visit, and individual guidelines for the interviewer and the note-taker.

Team Guidelines: Before the Visit

- If the team is to schedule the business interview, call to schedule an interview as soon as possible after the training, but within the time limit

set in the training; talk to the business owner/operator; and secure agreement to participate and set a date and time for the interview.
- Visit within the time limit set during the visitor training.
- Decide which member of the team will conduct the interview and which one will take notes.
- Review the materials from the visitation training.
- Practice the interview: be familiar with the survey purpose, the survey rules, and the survey questions, and know the name of the business, the nature of the business, and the name of the person you will be interviewing.
- Call the day before the interview to re-confirm the time and location of the visit.
- Arrive at the business slightly before the interview appointment is scheduled.
- If multiple interviews are scheduled on the same day, make sure you have allowed sufficient travel time between interviews. A good rule of thumb is to allow at least two hours for each interview.
- Make sure you have the business visitation packet for each interview you will be conducting.
- Inform the program sponsor (or some designated contact) if the business refuses to participate in the interview.

Team Guidelines: During the Visit

- The interview should be viewed as a professional activity, not a social occasion. It is important to arrive on time, even a bit early. The business owner/operator may keep the interview team waiting, but the opposite should never occur.
- Dress appropriately. How you dress, just as how you act, reflects on the sponsoring organization and sends a message about the professionalism of the process. What you wear may depend on several factors, such as the business you are visiting, the location of the visit, and local customs.
- Break the ice before the interview starts. Seek some common ground with the business owner/operator. Thank the owner for agreeing to participate in the survey.
- Make sure the person being interviewed has a copy of the questionnaire.
- Review the purpose of the program and go over the survey ground rules, paying particular attention to the "skip it" rule and the confidentiality of responses.

Team Guidelines: After the Visit

- Compare notes. Make sure that both of you heard the same thing. If necessary, expand the notes based on your common recollections of the business owner/operator responses.
- Discuss any issues of immediate concern and note these and any other items, such as requests for information or a personal contact, on the survey form.
- Return the questionnaire as soon as possible to the designated drop-off location.

Interviewer Guidelines

- Ask every question. The person being interviewed may elect not to answer a question, but the interviewer must ask every question in the questionnaire.
- Ask exactly as worded. Changing the wording of a question changes its meaning. It is all right to repeat a question but never appropriate to interpret the intent of a question. If the interviewee asks: "what does this mean," the appropriate response is to ask: "what do *you* think it means."
- Listen carefully. Allow the owner/operator time to think about a response.
- Never suggest answers! The sponsoring organization is not seeking the opinion of the interview team. It is looking for information from the business.
- Show a genuine interest in the responses. Acknowledge answers.
- Remember that a good interview technique results in good data.
- Probe for completeness. It is permissible to ask questions (e.g., "Would you mind telling us why you think ...?")
- Do not take offense or argue with the answers. Remember that you are there to collect data and not engage in debates.
- Do not promise solutions. As an interview team, you have no authority to address or resolve problems identified by the business owner/operator. You may promise that you will make the sponsoring organizations aware of the concerns and that someone will be in contact with the business to look into the problem.
- Do not forget the "skip it" rule.

Note-taker Guidelines

- Make sure you have an extra copy of the survey instrument and an extra pen for recording responses. In most survey programs, the business owner/operator will have received a copy of the survey instrument in advance, but it is always a good idea to have an extra copy on hand.

- Mark responses appropriately. Keep in mind that someone else will be taking the survey instrument and recording it in some sort of database for compilation and analysis. Be considerate of the data-entry operator and follow the directions on the survey as to how to mark answers
- Take complete notes and write legibly. Paraphrase long answers, if necessary, and then rewrite notes after the interview so that a more complete picture of the interview is presented.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a response. The role of the note-taker is not to engage in the conversation, but if you are unsure about a response or feel that you have not correctly recorded an answer, it is appropriate to ask for clarification or even to ask that the interview be paused while you catch up.
- Do not forget the "skip it" rule. If the interviewer skips a question, point it out. If the interviewee skips a question, make sure you skip the question in recording the responses.

Component 6 - Practice Business Visits

"Practice makes perfect" goes an old adage. That is certainly true for business visits, and the best practice may be in the form of an actual interview. It is useful for prospective team members to participate in a real-life situation to see how business owners/operators interpret questions and respond to the interview process. Practice interviews may involve larger groups of interviewers since the purpose is to get a "feel" for how the interview process actually works. However, finding sufficient businesses to participate in practice interviews and the added training time are potential drawbacks to this approach.

An alternative to a practice business visit is to participate in a mock interview. Mock interviews can be very simple or fairly sophisticated. On the simple end, teams can practice with a third person who assumes the role of a business owner/operator. A more detailed and engaging approach is to provide a script for each of the participants, dictating specific actions during the interview process. A fourth person can act as an observer and critique the actions of the interviewer and note-taker at the conclusion of the mock interview. Although this process requires less time on the part of those training to do business visits, it will require time and creativity on the part of the trainer, who will have to write a variety of scripts for the various participants in the mock interview.

APPENDIX C

Measuring Success in Your BRE Program

What gets measured gets done – Peter Drucker

When communities, businesses, and organizations realize they need a vision for the future and a roadmap for how to get there, a typical response is to initiate a strategic planning process (Cothran and Clouser, 2006). Many go so far as to set goals and write a plan. Some will implement their plans by completing projects; some will not. Even fewer will go so far as to develop indicators of success, collect baseline data, and implement a process to measure progress toward achieving the goals of their plan.

One of the reasons people or organizations fail to evaluate their programs is because the process can sometimes be quite mystifying. Terms like outcome, objective, or strategy are used interchangeably, leading to confusion on the part of those who are involved in the process. Another reason organizations skip the evaluation part of planning is because successful completion of a project is "good enough" and very little attention is paid to questioning whether or not the activity actually moved the organization closer to its desired outcomes.

Measurement Guidelines

Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted – Albert Einstein

Decide What Can and Should be Measured

Some measures might be easy to collect but provide little information about whether an activity actually moved the program toward accomplishment of a goal. On the other hand, some measures might be very useful but be impossible to collect. It is important to balance the need to know with the ability to find out. You make this decision based on available resources, including time, money, and the relative value of the information.

Choose the "Real" Measure of the Goal

If your goal is to keep young people from leaving the community by providing more local jobs, a measurement as simple as increasing total employment is probably not a good indicator. If the job increase is solely attributable to increases in part-time, minimum wage jobs, that may not really be the desired outcome. A measure such as the increase in manufacturing jobs might be better.

Focus on Positive Outcomes

An increase in employment in a community may also be an indicator that unemployment decreased. So which measure should be reported? Both measures involve value judgments, but increasing jobs may be viewed as the more positive measure to report.

Measure Progress, Not Activities

If your goal is to revitalize the downtown, the number of meetings on this topic is not a measure of progress, but a count of activities. Measuring the number of merchants who initiate recommended actions is a more appropriate measure (albeit a more expensive one to collect).

Conduct Intermediate "Checks" on Progress

Using this same illustration, it would be acceptable to report that a number of workshops were conducted because these provide evidence that you are on track toward achieving your overall goal. You might also evaluate the content, timing, and location of specific workshops to determine changes that need to be made to increase merchant involvement.

Balance the Number of Measures

There is no "correct" number of measures for any one goal. The only constraints are dictated by the time and effort needed to identify the baseline information, and the resources (personnel, time, and money) to track and collect the information needed to document change in the measure. To this end, it also helps to have a limited number of clearly stated measures that are easily related to the goal to be achieved.

Use Commonly Accepted and Clearly Defined Measurement Terms

In evaluation literature, it is not uncommon to see various measurement activities called by more than one name. For example, one guide might define the term "goal" the same way another guide defines "outcome" or "objective." Thus it is important to use agreed upon terminology and definitions. Table 1 defines the most common terms used in developing a series of measures for a retention and expansion program. Using these terms as they are defined in this table provides you and your BBRE partners and team members with a common language for the process of evaluating progress and success.

Table 1 - Commonly Terms Used to Develop BBRE Program Measures

Term	Definition	Example
Goal	A goal is the condition the program wants to achieve. A goal should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound	Continually identify and train new visitation team members
Objective	An objective is a measurable result that must be achieved (typically within one year) to achieve the goal	Train 10 team members this year
Activity	An activity is the effort that is undertaken to achieve the objective	Training sessions
Indicator	An indicator is something that must be changed or achieved by the activity in order to claim progress toward the goal	Total number of team members
Measure	A measure is how you count or value the status of an indicator	Change in team members
Unit	A unit defines what is counted	Team members trained
Baseline	The baseline defines the value of a measure at the starting point	Team members at the beginning of the year

Use a Checklist

You cannot manage what you cannot measure – Lord Kelvin

Most programs identify one or more goals before considering how success might be measured. It is important, however, to keep in mind that measuring success must begin before activities are undertaken because a baseline from which to measure change must be identified. Evaluation must also take place throughout the life of the program. With that in mind, it may be useful to establish a measurement checklist to ensure that your program establishes measures for a logical and complete process. Table 2 illustrates a checklist that can be followed for each goal in the program.

Table 2 – Program Goal Checklist

Program Goals			
✓	What is the goal?	✓	Where is the information?
✓	What are the objectives related to the goal?	✓	How will this information be obtained?
✓	What activities are related to the objectives?	✓	Who will collect the information?
✓	What indicators must be achieved?	✓	How many hours will it take to collect the information?
✓	How will you measure the status of the indicator?	✓	Will they be paid to collect the information?
✓	What is the unit of measure related to this indicator?	✓	When will the information be collected?
✓	What is the baseline value for this measure?	✓	How will progress from the baseline be measured?
✓	Will there be opportunities to do intermediate checks?	✓	How can this information be used to achieve the program goal?

It is important to demonstrate that your retention and expansion program is producing results for the community. This information is important for the BRE program leader, partners, funders, business owner/operators, and the community as a whole. Understanding how to select measures and collect information to evaluate the success of your program is a key characteristic of successful BRE programs. Using agreed upon language, a logical process, and a balanced number of measures can make your program more productive and successful.

APPENDIX D

Formatting the Report Content

Title Page

The title page should usually contain only the title of the report, the author(s), and the date the report was submitted (or adopted). However, if the report was sponsored by an outside organization, it is appropriate to identify the sponsor and the official project identification number (if applicable) on the title page.

Executive Summary

The executive summary immediately follows the title page. While its place in the report is at the beginning, it is usually written after the detailed report is completed. It should be brief; some authors recommend a limit of three pages. It should also be comprehensive, so that those who read only this portion of the report will have a clear understanding of the objectives of the activity that led to the production of this report and its findings and recommendations. Each important point should be identified with a bullet or similar identifying marker and described in a brief sentence or two. Leave a blank line between each bulleted point.

Table of Contents

Reports on the results of a Business Retention and Expansion survey will inevitably be longer than one or two pages. Thus it is important to include at the beginning of the report a "road map" to the document. A table of contents provides the reader with a means of accessing information without having to search through the entire document. The table of contents should stand alone in the report and be titled as such. It should list all the sections of the report and should include both the title of the section (or subsection) and the page on which it begins. The section and subsection titles should be identical to the wording in the body of the report, and of course the page numbers must be accurate. Some word processing programs provide an automatic feature that links the actual page numbers to the table of contents so that any changes in the body of the report that result in moving a section or subsection to a new page can be updated automatically. Additional items to be included in the table of contents are lists of appendices, tables, and figures (charts, graphs, and pictures).

For reports that contain a significant number of appendices, tables, and/or figures, it may be advisable to create new pages for each list. Just as with the section headings, the name of the item being referenced and its page number should match the actual item name and location in the body of the report. If these are included as separate pages, then each page would begin with a heading identifying the content of the page.

Introduction

The introduction may be viewed as an expanded and amplified executive summary. It is designed for those readers who wish to get a quick picture of the organization of the report. It should briefly lay out the structure of the body of the report and may be broken into subsections to assist the reader in navigating through the report. If subsections are desired for BRE reports, then at least two are recommended: *Background on the Project* and *Background on the Community*.

Background on the Project

The background on the project begins with a statement of why the project was undertaken. It should include information on the goals of the survey and outline the process that led to the development and implementation of the survey project. This subsection may be used to acknowledge the use of any outside assistance and to describe the methodology used to collect the data. However, if there is a need for more detail in acknowledgments and methodology, these may be shown as separate subsections:

- **Acknowledgment**: This subsection is used when the survey process included the outside assistance of volunteers in data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the report. Some consideration should be given as to whether to personally identify every individual involved in the project. It may also be appropriate to identify the businesses that participated in the survey and any individuals or organizations that provided physical or fiscal assistance.
- **Methodology**: This subsection provides the reader with information about the survey process; the number and types of businesses contacted (if appropriate); how the interview sample was selected; and how the data were collected, tabulated, and analyzed.

Background on the Community

The background on the community section should include as much information on the community as deemed necessary to aid in the interpretation of report findings and recommendations. Some sort of socio-economic profile should be included and, if helpful, a comparison should be made with similar communities or state averages.

Body

The body of the report follows the outline laid out in the introduction. The "meat" of the report, it contains the summarized findings of the business surveys and any appropriate information needed to assist the reader in understanding how the author(s) arrived at specific conclusions and recommendations.

- **Organizing Information Within the Sections of the Body**
  While there is no single ideal way to organize information in a report, a numbering system allows for a logical ordering of the main section and subsequent subsections within the report (Figure 1). Another method would be to use a scheme of indentations, perhaps combined with changes in the font size, to delineate between sections and subsections. Note that this same ordering sequence would also be used in the table of contents.

1. Section Heading
   1.1 Subsection Heading
      1.1.1 Sub-subsection Heading
      1.1.2 Sub-subsection Heading
   1.2 Subsection Heading
2. Section Heading

Figure 1. Ordering sequence

For reports on survey results, it is strongly suggested that the body of the report be organized to correspond to the stated goals of the survey that provided the information being presented in the report. Each section should have a number and a title. Within each section, four subsections should be considered:

- **Survey Results**. These are related to the goal and should be presented in a separate section heading. Survey results present the summarized responses of survey respondents to those questions related to the specific goal being addressed. Generally speaking, this information will be presented in tables and figures.
- **Other Information**. Documents findings and recommendations may be presented in the same manner as the survey results or in narrative form. Other information may come from the community profile presented in the introduction to the report or from another report that is readily available to the readers.
- **Findings**. These are based on the information from the survey or the background on the community and should be presented in a separately labeled subsection.

- **Recommended Actions**. This is the final subsection under each major section. Recommended actions should refer back to specific findings using the numbering system that identifies the related survey results and findings that the recommended action addresses.

Using Graphics in Reports

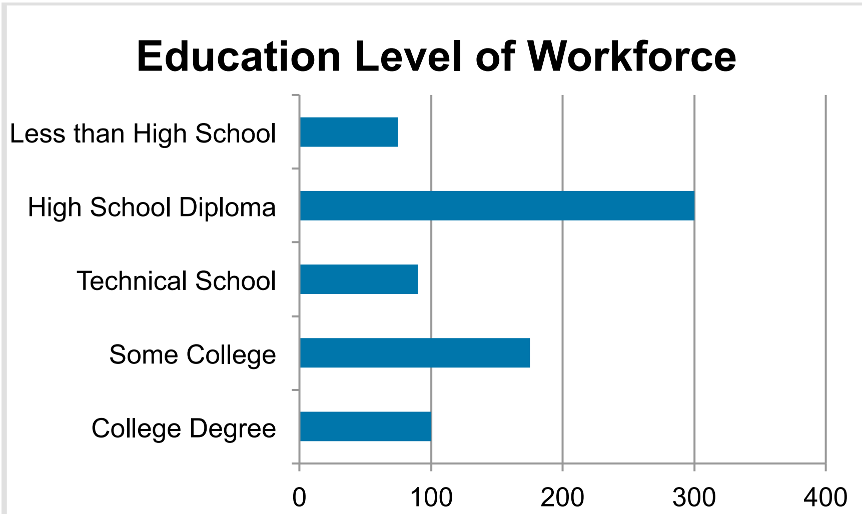
Graphics (tables, figures/graphs, and pictures) can enhance the readability of a report by pictorially depicting data, as well as emphasize significant information and substantiate findings, conclusions, and recommendations contained in the report. Placement and content are keys to increasing the usefulness of graphics. Knowing what graphics can convey and when to use particular types of graphics are also important (Hilligoss, 2000).

Tables display information in rows and columns. While technically not a graphic, a table is a means of visually displaying information.

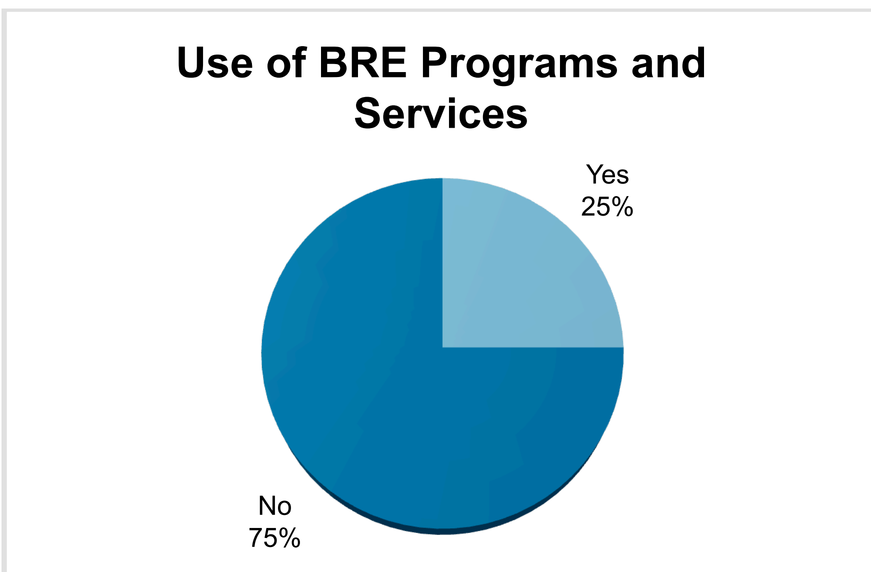
Table 1.1 Businesses in the Community		
Type of Business	**Percent in Community**	**Percent Surveyed**
Agriculture	2%	1%
Retail Trade	30%	31%
Manufacturing	25%	25%
Services	35%	33%
F.I.R.E	8%	10%

Graphs display information in different formats. Below are examples of bar, pie, and line graphs:

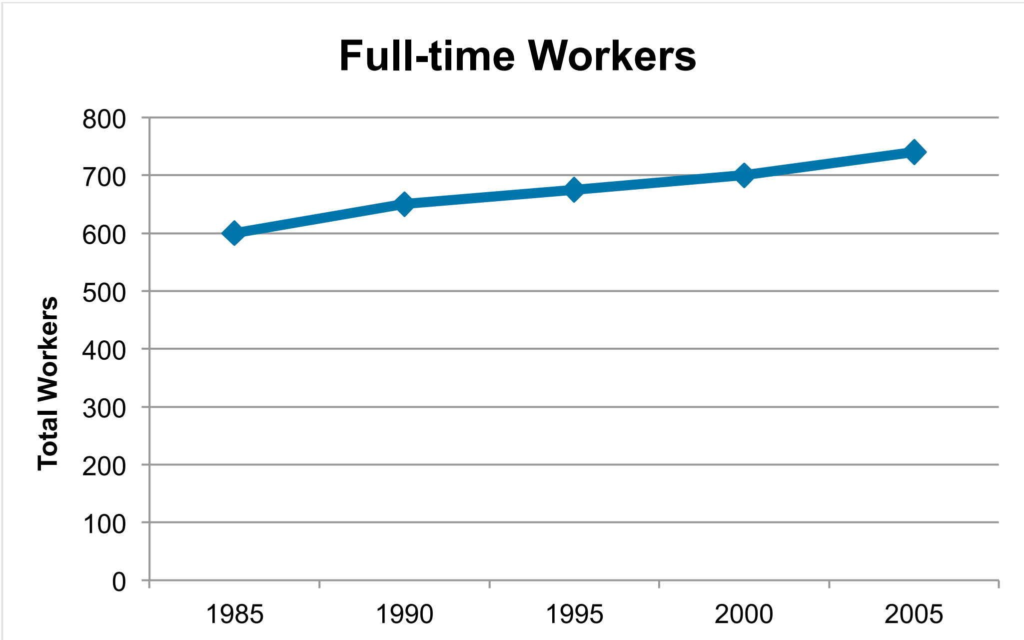
Bar graphs *show values across categories.*



Pie graphs *show parts in relation to the whole.*



Line graphs *typically depict information over time.*



All graphics should be labeled with a numbering sequence that corresponds to the section in which it is placed, a title that identifies content, and a sentence or two describing what it depicts.

Conclusions

As its name implies, conclusions "wrap up" the overall report. The conclusions section may briefly restate the purpose of the report and the data collection methodology. Since specific recommended actions are included in each section of the body of the report, recommendations contained in the conclusions should focus on actions to address the findings and recommendations contained therein. Conclusions should challenge the reader and identify the steps that need to be taken to implement the report.

Appendix

The purpose of the appendix is to provide the reader with information that assists in the interpretation of the body of the report, but which is too lengthy or is not essential to the specific conclusions and recommendations. Each appendix should be labeled with a letter (e.g., Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) and begin on a separate page. While there is no limit on what might be included as an appendix to the report, relevance to the project described in the report or to the findings and recommendations contained in the report should guide what is included. Typical appendices for BRE reports include:

- A copy of the questionnaire and the summarized results.
- Implementation strategies.
- List of volunteer interviewers (if not identified in the introduction).
- List of businesses visited (if not identified in the introduction).

Other Considerations

Cover

The cover of a report is not often thought to be important, but it may set the tone for the expectations of the reading audience. Do you use paper or plastic covers? How about plain or fancy covers? What information should be placed on the cover? The cover should attract attention and help convey the content of the report. Photographs or other graphics should be relevant (i.e., they should help identify the location and focus of the study). The information contained on the cover should be very limited and printed in a type size and color that makes it easy to read the information. The following elements are generally accepted as standard items that should be included on the cover:

- Title of the report
- Name of report sponsor
- Name of author (or authors)
- Affiliation of the author(s)
- Date of report publication

Binding the Report

There are many ways a report can be bound. Since you wish for these reports to be read and actively used, a ring or comb binding that allows the reader to open the document so that it may be laid out flat is probably best. Choose a ring binder if additional materials may to be added to the report after its publication. Otherwise choose a comb binding.

Transmittal Letters

Most reports are accompanied by a formal transmittal letter. Sometimes referred to as a cover letter, this document may be attached to the outside of the report or bound within the document (Beer and McMurray, 2005). The transmittal letter should use a standard business letter or memorandum format and should identify:

- The name of the report and the date of its publication
- The purpose of the report, as well as an overview of key findings and recommendations

- Sponsors of the report (if external)

Finally, the transmittal letter should conclude an invitation to those who read the report to follow-up with any questions or comments about the information contained in the report.