



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Bras d'Or Lake
Biosphere Reserve
Association

2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan

Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association

Anne Stieger and Tom Dalmazzi
Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre
February 2022

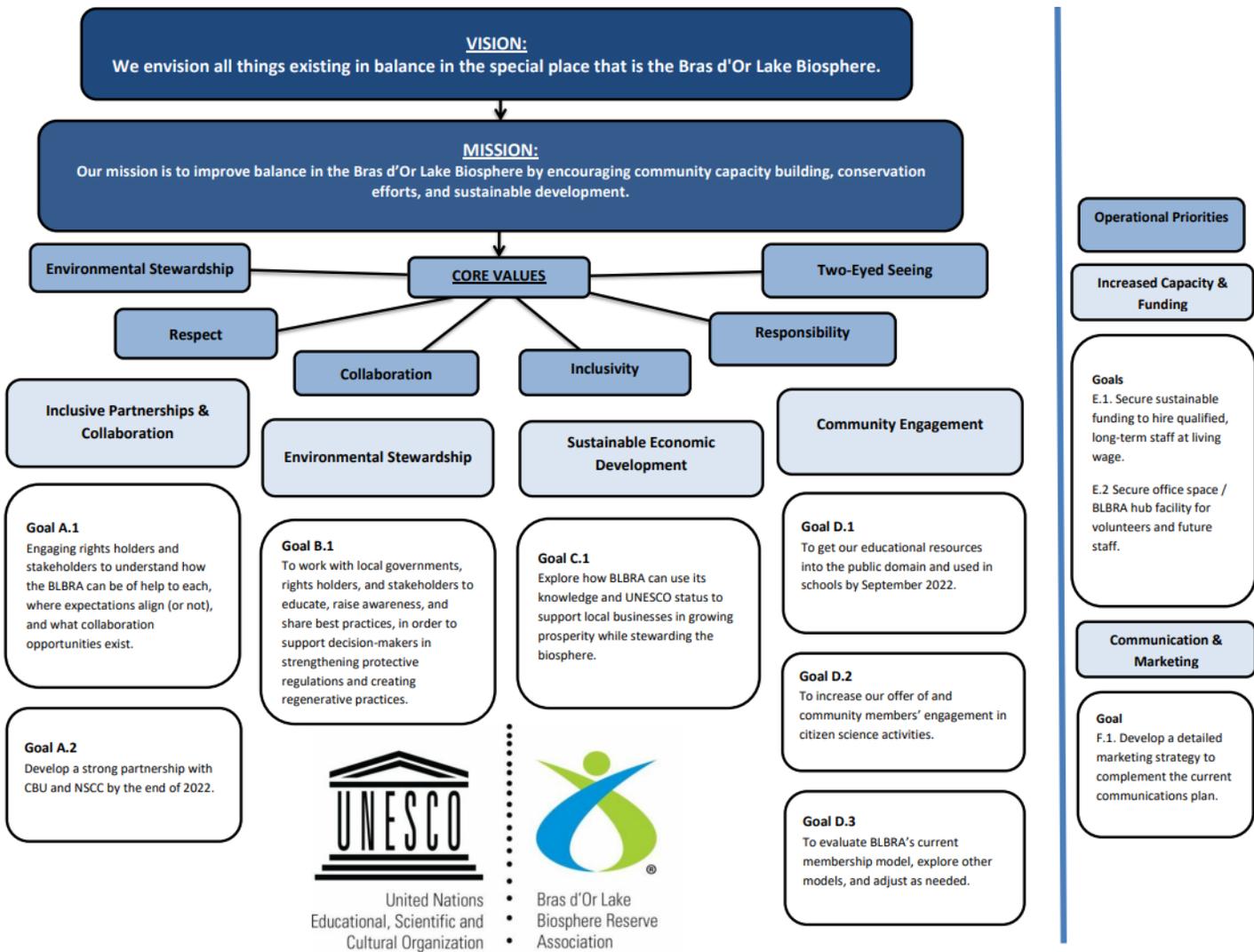


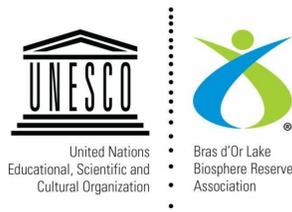
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Report at a Glance

*A larger, editable version of this flowchart can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#).





Introduction

This draft report is intended to summarize the results of the Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association (herein referred to as BLBRA or “the Association”) strategic planning sessions, which occurred on Oct 26, Nov 30, Dec 2, 2021, and January 31st, 2022 (detailed agendas can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#)).

These sessions were facilitated by Tom Dalmazzi and Anne Stieger of the Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre (AEC).

Planning Participants

The first planning session on October 26, 2021, was held in person at Wagmatcook Culture and Heritage Centre, Cape Breton and was attended by board members and stakeholders. The remaining sessions were held online and attended by the current board of directors:

Eileen Crosby	Allison McIsaac
Brian MacDougall	Amanda Mombourquette
Liz Campbell	Barbara Longva
Pierre LaRochelle	Chris King
Rodney Chaisson	Foncie Farrell
Rosella Born	Kirsty Lock
Stan Johnson	Tyler Mattheis

Intended Outcome

The purpose of this strategic planning process was to arrive at an updated strategic plan for Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Association, that will guide the organization in the coming three to five years. Additionally, this strategic plan can serve as an orientation document for future new board members.

The BLBRA received UNESCO designation in 2011, which requires re-affirmation every 10 years through an extensive and reflective Periodic Review Process currently under final evaluation. This strategic plan also considers lessons learned from that with an objective to remain a UNESCO designated Biosphere after the 2031 review.

Process

To reach the intended outcomes, the Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre used a three-pronged approach:

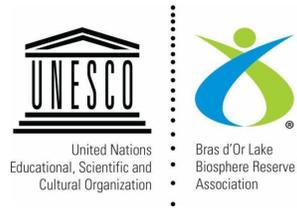


1. In August, AEC designed and administered an online survey that was sent to the organization's board and stakeholders. This survey was intended to capture the opinions and ideas of these distinct stakeholder groups, with respect to various aspects of the organization's operation and strategy. The survey was completed by 26 respondents and closed in September. A summary of survey results can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#).
2. AEC facilitated one live (face-to-face), and three online group strategic planning sessions – the first session was intended for both board members and stakeholders, while the remaining ones were intended for members of the board only. These planning sessions were structured to maximize idea generation, focused discussion, individual input, and decision-making. They made use of large group discussions, small group discussions (break-out groups), individual reflection, group presentations, and formal methods for prioritizing and reaching consensus. The sessions included the following steps (full agendas can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#)):
 - a. Review, analysis, and discussion of survey results.
 - b. Review and prioritization of a SWOT analysis.
 - c. Review of vision, mission, and core values.
 - d. Discussion and confirmation of key strategic priorities for the coming years.
 - e. Defining outcomes and goal setting for each priority area.
 - f. Identifying necessary resources and realistic timelines for implementation.

A Living Document

With this report, AEC is providing the organization with a living strategic planning document (a short visual overview can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#)). Each area of this document is to be used by the board to chart their primary goals and actions for the next months and years. It is important that this document be used to inform and enforce the following:

- Implementation of recommendations at the discretion of the board.
- Implementation of key priority area goals, actions, responsibilities, and timelines.
- Measurement of progress and success in implementing the strategic plan.
- Adjusting as is necessary.



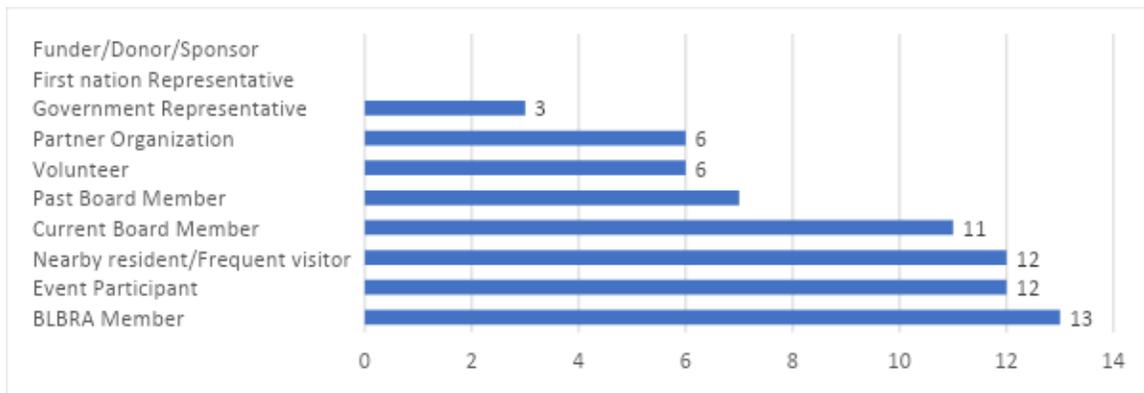
Throughout this process, this strategic plan should be treated as a living document, meaning it should be reviewed and adjusted regularly as the context of the organization changes, goals are achieved, and milestones reached.

A Glimpse at Results from the Survey

This section will provide a brief, high-level overview of themes emerging from the survey. In addition to the below overview, the [supporting documents folder](#) includes the full survey results and the summary of themes from the survey that was circulated to all planning participants before the first session ('primer').

Responses Collected	Average rating of BLBRA overall performance (1-10)	Percentage of external stakeholders who were satisfied or very satisfied with BLBRA communication	Most common word board members and volunteers use to describe BLBRA's "culture"
26	7	95%	Collaborative

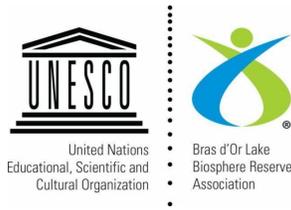
Who responded (select all that apply)?



Situational Analysis – SWOT

In the stakeholder survey, we asked participants to identify key strengths and weaknesses (internal factors), as well as opportunities and threats (external factors). The table below shows the most named themes. The full survey results and the primer (which includes a more detailed summary) can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External communication (citizen science, distributing information via website, signage, articles, newsletters) Collaborating with partners (collaborative networks like ACAP, indigenous inclusion, CEPI) Community engagement (utilizing committed volunteers, citizen science opportunities, public education, curriculum development) Internal communication and collaboration (well-planned AGMs and board meetings, usage of cloud platforms). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiting new volunteers and succession planning for key positions (lack of youth volunteers, audience typically shrinking membership, lack of new members and engaging the broader community, volunteer burnout) Building meaningful partnerships (lacking strong relationships with municipal units, provincial departments, local businesses, and education institutions) Fundraising and generating revenue for the organization Measuring success of initiatives and following up with the public and partners with key results and outcomes.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving operational efficiencies and increasing organizational capacity (paid staff) Community engagement via experiential learning opportunities (citizen science and public education that targets - shoreline protection, climate change) Building strong relationships partners in key areas (educational institutions, municipal units, provincial and federal government, band councils) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of political will and environmental protective legislation Changing funding climate (government cutbacks, shifting priorities) Failure to become an integral player in a group of like-minded organizations (competing priorities, area crowded with many environmental organizations, lack of clarity regarding org roles). Diminishing volunteer capacity and membership base (lacking youth, volunteer burnout, changing demographics)



Words associated with Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association

The image below shows visually what the key words are that survey participants associate with the organization. They were asked to list the first three words that come to mind when thinking of Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association.



Key Emerging Themes from Survey Results

The following key themes emerged in the survey responses. The 'primer' that was circulated to all planning participants in advance of the first session includes further detail and can be found in the [supporting documents folder](#).



Access to Sustainable Funding

Some indicated this should go beyond fundraising events and grants. Others felt fundraising and long-term grants or project-specific funding is the way to go. In any respect, it was clear that there is a need to explore funding options and opportunities to increase BLBRA's financial sustainability.



Education and Engagement of youth

This theme came up several times when asked about the "top 2 priorities" for BLBRA in the coming years. Directors clearly see the need to educate and engage young people in the work surrounding the health of the Biosphere Reserve. Youth are seen as a great avenue to also educating and engaging the generation that raised them.



Community Visibility, Engagement, and Self-Promotion

Responses indicated the community and BLBRA could both benefit from a much greater shared understanding of the purpose of the Biosphere Reserve and how it can be further cemented as an asset for sustainable economic development. It was noted that engagement must be inclusive – of newcomers, the business community, local indigenous population, non-academics, youth



Facilitating and Strengthening Key Partnerships

There were several responses that indicated that BLBRA would be strengthened if the neighbouring municipal units were more engaged and invested in the work of the BLBRA. Responses showed that any effort to identify and establish partnerships should also be inclusive - seeking out partners that will help engage newcomers, indigenous population, groups like CEPI, etc.



Increasing Organizational Capacity

Whether it be for marketing, general oversight of initiatives, administrative duties, driving the development of proposals: many respondents felt that there is a need to find a way to increase organizational capacity - by figuring out a way to hire paid staff.



Taking Action

We heard from many directors that a key priority of the BLBRA is to act and lead the charge in supporting conservation of native biodiversity, shoreline protection, and furthering climate change adaptation.

Mandate, Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Mandate

The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere is one of only 20 UNESCO Biospheres in Canada. UNESCO describes biospheres as “learning places for sustainable development. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. (...) Biosphere Reserves involve local communities and all interested stakeholders in planning and management. They integrate three main "functions":

- Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity
- Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable
- Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training

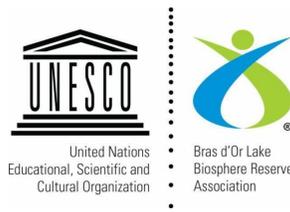
(...)

These three functions are pursued through the Biosphere Reserves' three main zones”

(<https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/about>)



(Image Source: <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/about>)



Vision

A great vision statement paints a clear and inspiring picture of what future state of affairs would be transpiring if the organization was perfectly successful. It is **not** about what events, services, or products the organization offers, but rather about the *ultimate* outcome(s) the organization is seeking to achieve through its work. Typically, vision statements are (a) stated in the present tense, (b) motivational and (c) concise/memorable.

Entering this strategic planning process, Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association used the following vision statement:

We envision the Bras d'Or Lake watershed as a special place where communities are joined together in thoughtful promotion of environmental assets and responsible economic development.

Throughout the process, the organization developed a new vision statement:

We envision all things existing in balance in the special place that is the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere.

Mission

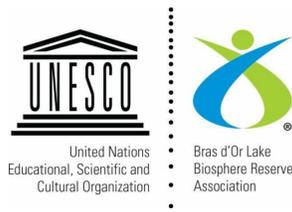
A great mission statement tells people *what* an organization does, *who* the organization does it for, and *how* they do it. If done effectively, the mission statement should describe the high-level methodology of how the organization will make progress towards its vision.

Entering this strategic planning process, Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association had an existing mission statement, which read:

It is our mission to engage all peoples in the balanced and sustainable development of the exceptional cultural, social, environmental, and economic assets within the Bras d'Or Lake watershed.

Through this planning process, the organization developed the following new statement:

Our mission is to improve balance in the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere by encouraging community capacity building, conservation efforts, and sustainable development.



Core Values

AEC and Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association spent some time during the live facilitated sessions discussing and updating the organization’s core values and guiding principles.

A **core value** is a value that an organization holds so near and dear that it would never consider violating it. For example: *Courage*

A **guiding principle** is a statement that guides the organization as it goes about its work and outlines how the organization will act daily to ensure they are living their core values. For example: *Because we value courage, we will empower women to use their own tools to know their own self-worth.*

Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Association entered the strategic planning process without core values.

Based on survey responses and planning discussions, the board of directors created and agreed on the following core values and draft guiding principles for the organization.

Note: While the values were completed and confirmed, the guiding principle statements are a work in progress at this point and will be finalized at a board meeting in the near future.

Value	Guiding Principle (drafts)
Environmental Stewardship	<p>Keyword Prompts: Sustainability/ conservation/ balance</p> <p>Draft Principle Statements:</p> <p>We will act based on recognition of how things used to be in the particular environment, how things are now, what they appear to be heading towards.</p> <p>In striving for balance, the BLBRA will consider the effect of all its decisions and actions concerning the environment.</p>
Respect	<p>Keyword Prompts: Multiple perspectives/ the environment/ future generations</p> <p>Draft Principle Statement:</p> <p>We will treat all BLBRA members, collaborating partners and residents with respect regardless of their background, education and/or skill level.</p>



<p>Two-Eyed Seeing</p>	<p>Keyword Prompts: Western/ Indigenous knowledge</p> <p>Draft Principle Statement: We will consider western and Indigenous perspectives relative to our actions and decisions. The BLBRA board must have Indigenous representatives.</p>
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Keyword Prompts: Building relationship/ working in partnership with business community, municipalities, First Nations</p> <p>Draft Principle Statement: We will invite and welcome the meaningful assistance/input/engagement of the other stakeholders and rights holders of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere.</p>
<p>Inclusivity</p>	<p>Keyword Prompts: Residents/ students/ youth/ Indigenous/ differently abled/ newcomers</p> <p>Draft Principle Statement: We will strive to have a broad representation of individuals such as youth, Indigenous, student, differently abled and newcomer residents on its Board.</p>
<p>Responsibility</p>	<p>Keyword Prompts: Transparency/ accountability/best interests of the biosphere</p> <p>Draft Principle Statement: We will act in a transparent manner and be accountable as it promotes the best interests of the Biosphere in all its actions.</p>

Strategic Pillars & Goals

The following section pertains to strategic goals; that is, the set of actions and results the Association believes – if pursued – will bring the organization closest to realizing its vision.

It was determined by the Board that the Association's key strategic goals can be grouped into four distinct, yet interrelated priority areas which are:

	<p>Inclusive Partnerships & Collaboration</p>
	<p>Environmental Stewardship</p>
	<p>Sustainable Economic Development</p>
	<p>Community Engagement</p>

The following pages will outline 1-2 goals for each priority area. Each goal includes a rationale, objectives, performance indicators, anticipated challenges to overcome, required resources, and timelines.

Note: Some of these sections are missing some detail. We suggest that these be addressed in the coming months at future board meetings. Keep in mind that this is intended to be a living document, in that it can and should be updated regularly as new information arises.

In addition to the 4 strategic pillars, 2 key operational pillars were also identified, each with their own set of goals and details. The operational pillars are listed [below](#).



Strategic Pillar A - Inclusive Partnerships & Collaboration

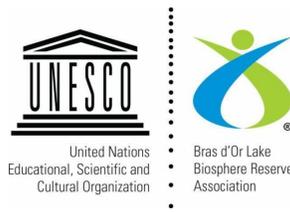
Goal A.1: Engaging rights holders and stakeholders to understand how the BLBRA can be of help to each, where expectations align (or not), and what collaboration opportunities exist.

Rationale:

The Association has identified a desire to increase and deepen partnerships and collaboration (with municipalities, environmental organizations, Indigenous communities, and others), to explore areas or gaps where BLBRA can add value or offer support and identify future areas of work. To this end, the Association will engage stakeholders, partners and rights holders (i.e. First Nation communities and organizations) and find out how the Association might be of service to them, where expectations and goals align (or not), and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	As a board, a) create a file of key rights holders and stakeholders (local, provincial, federal, international) to reach out to, b) identify key contacts to start the conversation with, and who will reach out to whom (by June 1st, 2022).
Objective 2	Create templates and materials for these conversations (including short, digestible infographics, impact metrics, ambitions, membership demographics, templates for meeting invitations) and review existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).
Objective 3	a) Conduct meetings with said partners, to see how we may facilitate their needs, expectations, and insights in an internal shared cloud folder b) discuss at board meetings to identify desired next steps.
Objective 4	Based on needs of each rights holder and stakeholder, follow up by sharing further information (be it via presentations, website links, promoting their events which fulfill the general goals of the biosphere, or other).



Objective 5	Negotiate and sign MOUs where applicable and integrate core resulting actions into regular operations.
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Key Performance Indicators:

- Contacts up to date
- Templates and materials created and ready for use
- MOUs in place (where applicable)

- # of meetings had
- Website linkages to BLBRA on partner sites (?)
- Mentions by other organizations and reach on social media (?)
- Organizational or non-private membership growth (see also [Goal D.3 – Membership model](#))

Main resources required:

- Updated materials with relevant information for each audience (see Objective 2)
- Willing and able people to attend the meetings

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal timeline:

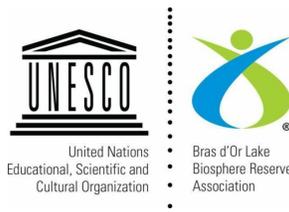
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Goal A.2: Develop a strong partnership with CBU and NSCC by the end of 2022.

Rationale:

BLBRA has identified that now is the time to begin rebuilding strong, mutually beneficial relationships with local, post-secondary academic institutions, including Cape Breton University (CBU) and NSCC (Marconi Campus and Strait Area Institute). There are several reasons for this:

- With growing ambitions, the BLBRA needs consistent access to opportunities for expanding organizational capacity – through student internships, student projects, practicums, and work placements. In return, BLBRA can offer valuable work experience for students.
- Further, the association has collected and monitored vast amounts of environmental data in the biosphere over the past decade, for the purpose of the UNESCO 10-year periodic review, that it believes these institutions would find valuable from an academic point of view.
- Additionally, there is an opportunity to streamline future data collection and sharing between all parties, which can support the experiential learning goals of NSCC and CBU, while also reducing the time investment for BLBRA volunteers preparing future periodic reviews.



- It should be noted that the Regional Centres for Education (Cape Breton Victoria, Strait Centres), as well as The Rankin School of The Narrows and Baddeck Academy are also seen as valuable future partners, which is addressed in other sections of this plan (see [Pillar D](#) and [Parking Lot Themes](#)).

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	Take stock of key contacts: identify past / existing key contacts; identify new points of contact in various relevant departments as needed.
Objective 2	Create templates and materials for these conversations (including short, digestible infographics, impact metrics, ambitions, membership demographics, templates for meeting invitations) and review existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). *Aligned with objective 2 in the previous goal.
Objective 3	Conduct meetings; collect and share key outcomes, needs, expectations, and insights in an internal shared cloud folder and discuss these at board meetings to identify desired next steps. *Aligned with objective 3 in previous goal.
Objective 4	Identify and implement an ongoing mechanism or shared process for data collection, knowledge sharing, and reporting. Further, identify opportunities for engaging students to increase organizational capacity (practicums, co-op placements, relevant student projects, etc.). Sign MOUs where appropriate.

Key Performance Indicators:

- Contacts up to date
- Templates and materials created and ready for use
- MOUs in place (where applicable)
- Mechanism in place and being used to share data
- amount of data shared (both ways)
- # of student placements at BLBRA

Main resources required:

- ...

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal timeline:

- ...



Strategic Pillar B – Environmental Stewardship

Goal B.1: To work with local governments, rights holders and stakeholders to educate, raise awareness, and share best practices, in order to support decision-makers in strengthening protective regulations and creating regenerative practices.

Rationale:

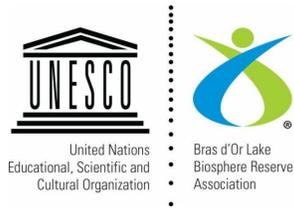
- The Association has identified a desire and ability to work with key players in the private sector, First Nation leadership, levels of government and other agencies, to improve environmental protection and climate change adaptation in the area. While BLBRA is not mandated to suggest, lobby for, implement, or enforce policies and regulations, the Association aims to raise awareness and educate by sharing scientific knowledge and best practices with decision-makers, in an effort to create regenerative practices.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	Connect with other biospheres in similar contexts and learn from them to inform this process (e.g., via CBRA).
Objective 2	Develop new and/or stronger relationships with elected officials and influential leaders in all affected municipalities and First Nation communities.
Objective 3	Work with local leadership, government and First Nations' Communities to improve shoreline protection and climate change adaptation by providing education about best practices and scientific information.
Objective 4	Provide education for people, property owners, businesses and other organizations living and operating within the Biosphere. (also see pillars C and D)

Key Performance Indicators:

- # of other biospheres connected with & learned from



- regulations changed /updated / put in place
- # of politicians talked to
- # of engagements had with individuals / property owners / organizations
- # of new relationships with leadership developed
- # of existing relationships with leadership nurtured

Main resources required:

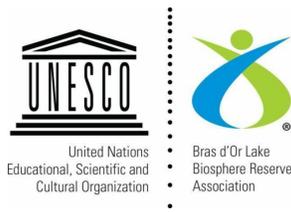
- Time & staff to do necessary research, meet with politicians (also see [Goal A2](#) and [Pillar E](#))

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal timeline:

- ...



Strategic Pillar C – Sustainable Economic Development

Goal C.1: Explore how BLBRA can use its knowledge and UNESCO status to support local businesses in growing prosperity while stewarding the biosphere.

Rationale:

The BLBRA has a mandate to support sustainable economic development, and has access to knowledge and resources that could be highly valuable for local businesses: the UNESCO status of the region can help draw in both customers and staff; the BLBRA can provide scientifically accurate information about the biosphere and about best practices for conservation that businesses can implement; the BLBRA can help businesses demonstrate their environmental values and attract environmentally conscious customers by engaging in environmental stewardship and conservation, or by implementing sustainable business practices; certain eco-tourism businesses may even benefit from a collaboration to enhance their visitor experiences by involving the BLBRA in their experiences.

In summary, the BLBRA can offer information, education, access to trails, experiences and more – but needs to determine what businesses want and need, to determine how the BLBRA can be most helpful and impactful.

The BLBRA will take the approach of working through business associations to connect with businesses and will start with those where collaboration and values-alignment already exist. The board identified that leaning on partners early in this process will be essential given BLBRA's capacity constraints.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	To engage with business development and support organizations that already have connections, collaborations, or values alignment with BLBRA (e.g. Cape Breton Partnership, Destination Cape Breton, TIANS, NSITEN, BABTA), in order to identify and prioritize what needs businesses have, and how the BLBRA might be able to help them align environmental protection with their business goals.
Objective 2	To Pilot engagement efforts with a few (1-5) intentionally selected businesses who already share BLBRA's values to secure easy early wins, while measuring impact along the way (e.g., a kayaking tour business may want to engage customers in a lake Shoreline Watch organized by BLBRA to enhance their customer experience and demonstrate their environmental values).

Objective 3	To actively review pilot projects and their success measurements, learn from them, and adjust, so that objective 4 can be adjusted as needed and pursued based on best practices and success stories.
Objective 4	To expand collaborations to other business associations, starting with those with closer alignment and working towards those who share fewer values and require more education (e.g., forestry or mining associations in year 5). BLBRA will use previous success stories and engage in both needs assessment and pilot projects specific to these groups (repeating objectives 1 & 2 for this audience), while continuing to measure success and adjusting actions, until a successful model is found.

Key Performance Indicators:

- # of business support organizations engaged with during needs assessment
- # of business owners engaged with during needs assessment
- # of pilot projects started & evaluated
- # of businesses incorporating 'the biosphere' in their marketing / advertising
- *(KPI for pilot projects themselves to be established once projects are defined)*

Main resources required:

- Partnerships with collaborators (e.g. Cape Breton Partnership, Chambers of Commerce)
- Time
- The tourism objective could be done by a CBU business student under the community research program by early summer.

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal timeline:

- Objective 1 – by March 2023
- Objective 2 – by March 2024
- Objective 3 – By March 2025 / 2026 / 2027



Strategic Pillar D – Community Engagement/Capacity Building

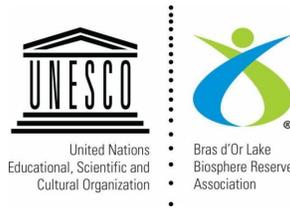
Goal D.1: To get our educational resources into the public domain and used in schools by September 2022.

Rationale:

- In the past several years, the association has invested a significant amount of time and effort into developing high-quality educational materials for use in schools. It was determined by the board that the organization’s educational resources (in-school material, and other educational resources like maps, bird books, etc.) have been vastly underutilized to date. Given that more is being asked of teachers now more than ever, the BLBRA feels that there is a thirst in the sector for prepared, approved materials that can be pulled off the shelf and delivered easily. The BLBRA wishes to see their materials distributed and properly piloted as soon as possible.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	Identify curriculum changes that have occurred since material development and update accordingly.
Objective 2	Leverage improved relationship with CBU to identify opportunities for student capacity (School of Education). *See also Goal A.2 - Inclusive Partnerships & Collaboration
Objective 3	Develop relationships with schools to introduce and promote use of the material.
Objective 4	Aim to pilot material in classrooms during the 2022/2023 school year.
Objective 5	Evaluation of material pilot program throughout the 2022/2023 school year.
Objective 6	Update and redesign these education resources, based on feedback from the pilot by engaging students at either NSCC or CBU to enhance with coloured photos/ illustrations .
Objective 7	Create a pipeline for continued use of existing materials and identify opportunities for new programming / material development as needed (e.g. by incentivizing teachers or



	CBU students via a small annual grant / financial incentive to develop and submit new programs to the Association).
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Key Performance Indicators:

- Material usage rates
- Pre and post program surveys – evaluation data
- qualitative data & testimonials from teachers and students

Main resources required:

- Relaunching the Education Committee
- Cooperation by the NS Department of Education

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- Interest in collaboration on behalf of NS Department of Education

Goal timeline

- ...

Goal D.2: To increase our offer of and community members’ engagement in citizen science activities.

Rationale:

- The Association desires to increase its offer of Citizen Science Activities to engage visitors and residents of the biosphere in educational, awareness-raising activities that have the potential to inspire action, advocacy, or changes in their habits and decision-making. This will balance out the engagement activities focused on youth in schools (see Goal D.1 above). Further, this will provide opportunities to recruit new volunteers

Note: While not explicitly stated under each objective below, we recommend that the BLBRA reserve time after launching each new watch to review success metrics and reflect on successes and failures, to inform upcoming and future initiatives. This will also allow reflection on how to leverage these activities to increase volunteer capacity for future expansion and program delivery.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	To monitor Middle River at MacLennan's Bridge and at two springs in the West Bay area during 2022 as a pilot project for Stream Water Watch . Requires three passionate volunteers to work and learn from a hydrologist. If successful, the pilot will expand to 6 volunteers in 2023.
Objective 2	To plan procedures to initiate Shoreline Watch with the assistance of three professionals - a hydrologist, a climate technician and CBU student researchers.
Objective 3	To engage ACAP for 2022 to conduct Bras d'Or Watch in four locations around the Lake. It will include one family field day and data collection as well as a Bioblitz and independent scavenger hunt (See also Pillar B - Environmental Stewardship).
Objective 4	To develop a Forest Watch program for Children and families in 2022 and launch it in 2023 (See also Pillar B - Environmental Stewardship).
Objective 5	Delivery of Birds of the Biosphere Kits to 10 elementary schools in the Biosphere followed by class presentation (or on zoom if PH restrictions). To be carried out by NSCC student who is enrolled in the Natural Resources Environmental Technology Program. March/April of 2022. (See also Goal D.1)

Key Performance Indicators:

- Watches designed and implemented by their respective due dates listed above
- Number of people participating in each watch
- Qualitative: Participant feedback

Main resources required:

- Funding (one grant of \$7,710.00 has already been applied for, which would cover the cost of Bras d'Or Watch and Stream Water Watch if successful)
- Time

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- Funding

Goal timeline:

- 2022 – 2024



Goal D.3: To evaluate BLBRA’s current membership model, explore other models, and adjust as needed.

Rationale:

The Association, as many other membership-based organizations, has seen a decline in membership in recent years. During this planning process, a desire to increase engagement from the community at large was identified – however, BLBRA is aware that membership alone does not equal engagement: Most members are not actively engaged other than paying their fee and executing their voting rights at AGMs. On the flipside, several of the most engaged contributors are volunteers, but not paying members.

While growing membership was initially discussed as a potential goal, it has become clear that the more relevant goal for BLBRA is to increase engagement – including growing a larger base of volunteers (who may not be members), of people helping to protect the biosphere in their own contexts, and of people partaking in learning and education efforts. To this end, BLBRA will re-evaluate its current membership model, compare it to other options, and choose a model that will best support the Association’s desire to

- a) Grow volunteer engagement,
- b) Keep and grow a donations-based revenue stream,
- c) Ensure that those with voting rights at the AGM are well informed about operations, and
- d) Expand the overall reach and effectiveness of the organization.

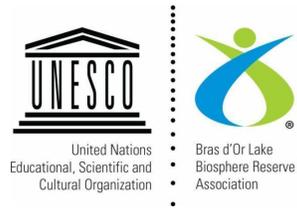
Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	To evaluate the current model for membership and engagement: why it was chosen, and whether it still serves the organization in optimal ways, given the overall goal of increasing engagement.
Objective 2	To explore alternative membership models and compare them, including how community members would be able to engage within each.
Objective 3	To actively choose the model best suited for BLBRA and its goals (be it the old one or a new one).
Objective 4	To set growth targets adequate for that new model (be it growing membership, volunteer base, or other).

Key Performance Indicators:

- # of alternate membership models explored
- Further KPI to be identified as part of objective 4

Main resources required:



- Marketing / membership committee and chair

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal timeline:

- By end of 2022

Operational Pillars & Goals

The following sections outline operational goals – these are typically goals that are shorter term in nature and will support the achievement of strategic goals. In the case of BLBRA, operational concerns focus on capacity, office space, and funding – things that will be necessary to successfully reach the strategic aspirations outlined above.

The two operational pillars that will be described in detail on the pages to follow are:



	<p>Increased Capacity & Funding</p>
	<p>Communication & Marketing</p>

Operational Pillar E – Increased Capacity & Funding

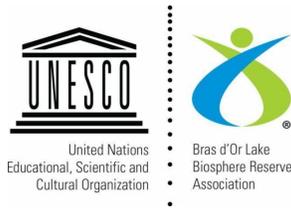
Goal E.1: Secure sustainable funding to hire qualified, long-term staff at living wage.

Rationale:

- The Association has, thus far, operated solely as a volunteer-run organization. To further increase their impact and to prevent volunteer burn-out, it is now a key priority to find a way to hire staff who can take care of day-to-day operations and oversee special projects and programs. Based on the Association’s needs and the strategic priorities outlined above, this staff member should have a few years of relevant experience (rather than an inexperienced youth), as the board has limited capacity to provide oversight. This person will be paid a salary commensurate with qualifications and experience, to provide meaningful, sustainable employment and increase chances that this person will stay with the organization for an extended period of time.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

<p>Objective 1</p>	<p>Review needs of the organization, and draft clear job description(s) for this new position(s).</p>
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Objective 2	Explore various funding options for hiring staff (through partners, government funding, etc.) & secure funding.
Objective 3	Ensure the organization is administratively ready to hire staff (file organization, payroll setup, clarity on roles and supervision, onboarding plan).

Key Performance Indicators:

- Funding secured
- Staff hired & onboarded

Main resources required:

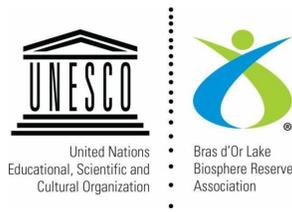
- Time to prepare

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal Timeline:

- As soon as possible



Goal E.2: Secure office space / BLBRA hub facility for volunteers and future staff.

Rationale:

- Related to hiring staff (see goal E.1), the Association will need a space where staff can be based, meetings can be hosted, and files can be housed.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	Exploring different options and cost comparison for each (incl. renting, free space as part of partnership, etc.).
Objective 2	Implement the best option, including potential funding applications to cover costs.

Key Performance Indicators:

- Cost-analysis & comparison of different options completed
- Office space secured

Main resources required:

- Time to explore options, speak with partners
- Funding (unless free through partnership)

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...

Goal Timeline:

- ...



Operational Pillar F – Communication & Marketing

Goal F.1 Develop a detailed marketing strategy to complement the current communications plan.

Rationale:

- The Association currently has a communications plan that outlines what type of information should be sent to varying groups at different time intervals. This plan provides detail for administrative communication. However, the Association does not have an in-depth marketing or promotions plan outlining who their main external audiences are, what they would like each of those audiences to do, and what information and calls to action they need to receive (via which channels) to take the desired action.

Key objectives required to complete the goal:

Objective 1	Identify internally what gaps and needs exist and begin clarifying what audiences are to be reached with which purpose, to be able to outline what the scope of work will be (knowing a consultant will help clarify this further in their intake and once contracted).
Objective 2	Secure quotes from at least 3 marketing and communications specialists.
Objective 3	Secure funding.
Objective 4	Engage a Marketing & PR consultant to create an in-depth marketing & promotions plan.

Key Performance Indicators:

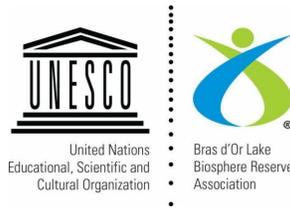
- Funding secured
- Consultant contracted
- *further KPI are to be developed based on the marketing strategy developed*

Main resources required:

- Funding (ACOA grant is an option)
- Matrix of information identifying the stakeholders/audiences & interests related to strategic priorities outlined in this document

Unknowns or possible resistance:

- ...



Goal timeline:

- ...

Facilitator's Observations & Suggestions

Parking Lot Themes

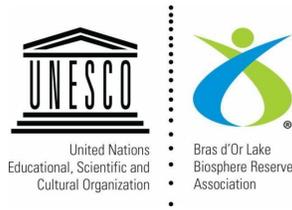
During the facilitated sessions, the facilitators provided a “parking lot” – a space where ideas, topics, discussion points that are important, but could not be discussed at the time, could be placed so that they can be addressed later.

During the planning sessions, the following items were placed in the Parking Lot:

- The idea of hosting a capstone event (such as a larger conference) came up several times throughout this process; this is not something the Association can currently take on, but might be possible in the future, once a paid staff member who could organize this is in place.
- Similarly, an idea for providing hands-on, experiential outdoor experiences for school trips (in addition to paper-based materials) was parked due to lack of capacity but might become possible once staff is in place. If the Association were to explore this in the future, we recommend connecting with Alan Warner of the Acadia University Community Development Department, as he has extensive experience in creating hands-on, creative, story-based environmental learning experiences.

Facilitators' Suggestions

- In implementing this strategic plan, we recommend focusing first on increasing BLBRA's capacity by finding the funding to hire staff, as that will support the pursuit of all other goals outlined in this plan.
- At several points in this process, the need to recruit more volunteers and a desire to recruit a more diverse volunteer base (including youth and young adults) has come up. We recommend that the Association clarify what volunteer opportunities are available by answering questions such as: Why should I volunteer with the BLBRA? What exactly would I be doing as a volunteer? When, where, and with whom would I be doing those things? What can I gain from this volunteer opportunity? (see also [Goal D.3](#))
- If the association, in its work towards Goal D.3, decides to continue using a general membership model, we recommend clarifying the following questions, as the culture and expectations around memberships have shifted in our society. More and more, people ask themselves: Why should I become and stay a member? What am I paying this fee for – what is it doing for the community? What is the impact this organisation is having? What do I get out of being a member? We recommend finding clear and inspiring answers to these and similar questions if membership that is open to all remains part of the model.



Recommendations for Implementation

As with any strategic planning process, the completion of the planning process is also the beginning of the implementation process; while this process has answered many questions, its implementation also requires a fair amount of time, work, and commitment.

To ensure this strategic plan is completed, implemented, reviewed regularly, and updated as needed over the coming years, the AEC recommends that:

- the Association focuses considerable short-term efforts on the operational pillars, as these provide the foundation for the strategic goals.
- the Association prioritizes exploring options for expanding their human resources as one of the first steps in the implementation of this strategic plan. We recommend this because it has become clear in this process that the Association requires additional human resources, and that additional office space will be needed in order to hire staff.
- the Association refers to this plan, the new vision, mission, and values as decisions are made, asking whether the direction at hand will support them.

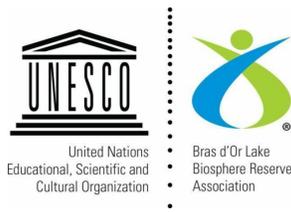
Next Steps

With the submission of this report, and in reflecting on our closing discussion during the planning session, AEC believes the Association's next steps are:

1. To review, complete, and finalize:
 - a. the guiding principle statements for each core value;
 - b. update online and print materials according to the new mission, vision, and values;
 - c. update the strategic and operational goals to ensure each goal has a complete list of objectives, KPIs, resource needs and timelines **by...**
2. To formally adopt the final strategic plan: *at March board meeting*
3. To consider identifying a board champion for each strategic goal (board – someone who is responsible for the oversight of each goal): **by March 2022**
4. To regularly review and update the goals and attach additional measurable outcomes, objectives, timelines and responsibilities to each goal: *ongoing*.
5. To set a date for the Association to conduct an interim review of these goals, objectives, and progress made: *date to be established by*
6. To consider preparing a 'public-focused' document (1-2 pages maximum), video presentation, or webinar highlighting the outcomes of this strategic planning process, to be shared with all stakeholders (especially those groups who contributed to the initial survey): **by....**
7. To plan for the board to review relevant parts of this plan with future staff at least once per year.

In addition to these action steps, AEC strongly urges the Association to think about the long-term implementation of this strategic plan. For all the time and energy the Association has invested in it, the true test of its usefulness will unfold over the next 1-3 years. AEC recommends one or more of the following methods for regular review:

1. **Committing every third board meeting to the strategic plan:** some organizations find that the most effective way to implement their strategic plan is to intentionally make time for it during regularly scheduled board meetings. To that end, some organizations choose to reserve every third (or fourth) board meeting strictly to review, discuss, and evolve the strategic plan (putting any standing board business aside). This ensures the board and Executive Director have at least one hour, 3-4 times a year, to measure progress and keep this living, breathing document moving forward.
2. **Committing at least 33% of every board meeting to the strategic plan:** alternatively, some organizations choose to commit a portion (usually a third or more) of every board meeting to

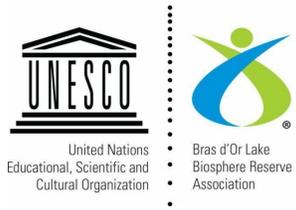


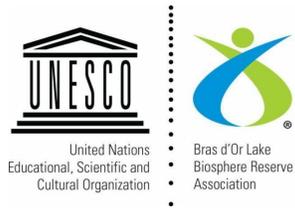
discuss a single strategic issue. Although a third of every board meeting may be just 20-40 minutes, it ensures that the strategic plan stays ‘top of mind’ for everyone involved.

3. **Forming a strategic planning steering committee:** if these two alternatives do not fit, the Association may choose – like some other organizations – to appoint a strategic planning steering committee. The role of this committee is to meet quarterly or semi-annually with the Executive Director to discuss and evaluate the progress of the strategic plan. At appropriate intervals, the committee would report back to the board. Although this approach is preferable to ‘no approach’, its drawback is that it limits the sense of shared responsibility that all team members should feel for the strategic plan.

If the Association was to choose one of these implementation models, the question then becomes: *through which method(s) should the Association address or evaluate the strategic plan?* While some organizations choose to do this rather informally (i.e. hold a general unstructured discussion each time), some organizations choose to use the following framework or something similar. Such a framework – which is often completed by the Executive Director in advance of the board meeting, provides a useful starting point for group discussion.

Question	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5
How much progress has been made on this goal since the previous check-in? (1 = little/none, 7 = significant)					
To what degree does this goal remain relevant to our success? (1 = not at all, 7 = significantly)					
Does this goal (or its objectives, KPIs, etc.) need to be modified in any way? (Yes/No)					
Does this goal require further direction from the board in order to continue progressing? (Yes/No)					
Does this goal require further input from other stakeholders and rights holders in order to progress? (Yes/No)					
Have there been any major changes in the internal or external environment affecting how we pursue this goal? (Yes/No)					





Appendix: Supporting Documents

All supporting documents can be found in [this organized shared folder](#).