

# A History Of Benefits: Local User Councils Keep Owners Competitive

By **Connie Fabré, Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance, Inc. (GBRIA)**

**L**ocal User Councils (LUCs) have come a long way. They started forming over 40 years ago with The Business Roundtable and today are affiliated with major organizations like the Construction Users Roundtable (CURT). The Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance (GBRIA) has been an active local user council and trade association for 39 of those years.

GBRIA was founded in 1970 as a committee of the Greater Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce but incorporated as a stand-alone organization in 1981 under the name Greater Baton Rouge Industrial Managers Association (GBRIMA). In 2005, the name was changed with a new goal to reach out to neighboring communities. GBRIA's mission is to drive and coordinate sustainable, cost-effective solutions to common issues for industry, its affiliates and communities. This has included a focus on construction best practices, safety training, contractor workforce development and being a spokesperson and advocate for its members and their industries.

The GBRIA logo, with its three up-swept arrows, stands for the three keys to sustainable development: economy, environment and community. GBRIA members include approximately 60 facilities spread across 8 parishes (counties) surrounding Baton Rouge, LA. The members come from the chemical, paper, energy, non-ferrous metal processing, liquid storage terminals, and petroleum refining industries. They range from as few as 25 employees to as many as 3,400 employees per facility. These manufacturers make the ingredients in food-grade wax for chocolate and crayons, plastic bottles, household cleaners, Styrofoam plates, tissue paper, plastic wrap, automotive fuels and much more.

Through GBRIA, members utilize many

available programs that help them remain competitive in the global economy. Efforts and activities to achieve an injury-free workplace, develop a world-class competitive contractor work force and benchmarking best practices from one another all help the Baton Rouge region. Among the association's notable successes benefiting members and the community are achieving lower health care costs by helping form the Louisiana Health Care Alliance in 1984, partnering with the Pelican Chapter of the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) to build and operate a skilled craft training center since 1985, and partnering with the Safety Council of the Louisiana Capital Area to deliver standardized safety orientation training for contractors since 1991. In addition, the association acted as a key driver and liaison between owners and union contractors through the Baton Rouge Industrial Contractors Association (BRICA).

The work of the association has been truly world class. Craft assessments and training curricula, safety training curricula, security screening criteria, contractor pre-qualification criteria, and more programs developed by GBRIA have been adopted by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), Association of Reciprocal Safety Councils (ARSC), the Safety Council Security Consortium (SCSC), and the National Background Screening Consortium (NABSC). These programs are being used in many regions around the country.

GBRIA's active engagement with CURT has also benefited its members. Information sharing on similar issues with local user councils from around the country brings key ideas and lessons learned back to the members. CURT's awards program has also helped GBRIA promote safety and cost improvement. GBRIA was

awarded the Construction Industry Safety Excellence Award (CISE) from BRT/CURT in 1994 and 2006. In addition, in 1987, the association was awarded the Construction Industry Cost Effectiveness Excellence Award (CICE). And in 2007 the ABC Pelican Chapter whose training center GBRIA members sponsor, was awarded CURT's Workforce Development Award.

In more recent years GBRIA has been active with BRT's I'M GREAT program—the Gulf Rebuild Education and Training initiative—which has trained over 20,000 new construction workers since 2005 and is also actively engaged in promoting the new Construction Workforce Development Center's (CWDC) Forecasting program.

In today's economic climate, you simply cannot afford to be out of the loop locally with other like-minded owners. Sharing promotes reciprocity, keeps costs down and prevents new inventions of the wheel, which in turn helps to keep members competitive. Join your LUC today and multiply CURT's membership benefits for your company. ●

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