

2010



BRAC RTF Phase 1 Process Assessment



Branda L Nowell, Ph.D.

Kathi Beratan, Ph.D.

Anne-lise Knox Velez

Connie West

North Carolina State University

This study was prepared under contract with the Fort Bragg Regional Alliance with financial support from the Office of Economic Adjustment, Department of Defense. The content reflects the views of the Fort Bragg Regional Alliance and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Economic Adjustment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The mission of the BRAC Regional Task Force (RTF) is to help the region prepare for and benefit from the large changes accompanying mission growth at Ft. Bragg. The founding of the BRAC RTF reflects an understanding that regional approaches to common challenges could provide new opportunities for development. This report provides an assessment of the impact of the BRAC RTF, based on interviews with twenty-three people who have served on the Board of Directors of the BRAC Regional Task Force.

Where are the greatest opportunities for regional collaboration?

Respondents identified a range of issues that they feel provide opportunities to benefit from cooperation. The most prominent of these include:

- Water resources and infrastructure
- Sewer/waste water infrastructure
- Transportation/road systems
- Leveraging economies of scale to compete with other areas for resources
- Education/workforce development

What are the greatest threats to a regional approach that must be overcome?

Respondents recognized that regional cooperation is neither simple nor easy. The most commonly noted barriers facing individual participants include:

- The inherent conflict between local accountability and regional interests
- The time required to travel to and attend meetings
- Lack of mechanisms within the counties for communicating about the BRAC process

The greatest barriers for cooperation between counties/municipalities include:

- The culture of competition among local governments
- A perception that development is a zero-sum game - that there is only a certain amount of development to go around, so collaboration will not increase opportunity
- Lack of implementation funding

Barriers to the region's success include:

- Lack of a properly trained workforce
- Infrastructure inadequacies
- The challenge of maintaining collaborative relationships

What were respondents' motivations for participating in the BRAC RTF?

Respondents were motivated to participate on the BRAC RTF Board of Directors for several reasons:

- A personal belief in the value of regionalism
- The potential of regional cooperation for providing business and job growth opportunities
- Desire to stay informed about the BRAC process

Some had expected that their county or town would receive federal BRAC funding, but noted that this misconception had been quickly corrected.

How have counties benefited from involvement in the BRAC RTF?

All of the respondents believed that their counties have experienced at least a little benefit from involvement with the BRAC process, with about half reporting quite a bit or a great deal of benefit. Interestingly,

representatives of the Tier I and Tier II counties responded similarly to this question, despite the expectation that Tier I counties would benefit more than Tier II counties. Aspects of participation that were identified as particularly beneficial to the counties were:

- The opportunity for regional networking
- Getting useful information about the BRAC process
- The opportunity to better market and promote their county to development interests
- Obtaining resources through BRAC RTF development initiatives (e.g., high tech classrooms)

The Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan (CRGP) report was considered particularly useful by many respondents, regardless of the perceived benefit to the county of other aspects of the BRAC process.

How has the BRAC RTF increased regional collaborative capacity?

Overall, respondents reported that the BRAC RTF has had some positive influence on regional capacity but that there is room for improvement. Although several respondents noted that they already had a positive view of regionalism prior to the BRAC process, most indicated that their positive view of regionalism had been strengthened. Most also reported that they have a greater sense of regional identity as a result of the BRAC process. An increased sense of connection to Ft. Bragg was an important component of increased regional identity, although not all of the counties feel an equal connection due to geographic differences in the potential impacts of military-related growth. Respondents' knowledge of other counties had increased a little; this increased familiarity was not

limited to adjacent counties, suggesting that the BRAC process has helped to build familiarity across the region and not just between immediate neighbors.

On average, respondents reported that the BRAC process had somewhat increased their ability to collaborate with individuals in other counties. These reported changes in attitudes towards regionalism among respondents and the expansion of their networks of relationships provide evidence that the BRAC process has had some positive influence on regional collaborative capacity. However, limited communication about the process between the respondents and their local governments has limited such capacity growth.

What are the strengths, areas for improvement and lessons learned from Phase 1 of the BRAC RTF?

Several factors were listed by respondents as being the key strengths of the BRAC RTF, and as particularly important to BRAC RTF's success:

- The competence and responsiveness of the BRAC RTF staff
- The strong leadership and vision of Paul Dordal
- The staff's military backgrounds
- Early demonstrations of success

Respondents also identified several areas where the BRAC RTF process could have been improved upon. These included the need to:

- Develop a more effective process and mechanism for communicating with a broader group of people in participating communities

- Do more to strengthen relationships and encourage participation among Board members
- Increase transparency and manage concerns of equity
- Clarify expectations of the timeline of the BRAC process
- Keep the Board size manageable

A number of key “lessons learned” during the BRAC process were identified by the respondents as potentially useful for the BRAC RTF and for other regional efforts:

- Identify shared interests and build a common vision,
- Have a plan based on good growth projections
- Make expectations clear and reasonable
- Recruit the right people
- Be transparent and fair
- Stay engaged and do not underestimate the complexity of sustainable regional development
- Be persistent in getting the message out to the region
- Build on lessons learned from other regional projects

What should be the future of the BRAC RTF?

Continuation of the BRAC RTF in some form was supported by all but two of the respondents. Most respondents felt that working together had been positive for their counties, and that a regional organization is needed in order to keep the process moving forward. The other two respondents were not sure that they could make an informed decision until the influx of new residents had arrived, or until they understood what the role of the continuing organization would be and how it would relate to other existing regional entities.

Many respondents described roles that they would like to see a continuing organization fill. The three most commonly mentioned roles were:

- To act as an advisor and convener to help the counties keep working together as a region
- To act as an advocate for the region and work to secure funding
- To serve as a communication hub to keep updated information available

This study was prepared under contract with the Fort Bragg Regional Alliance with financial support from the Office of Economic Adjustment, Department of Defense. The content reflects the views of the Fort Bragg Regional Alliance and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Economic Adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an assessment of the impact of the BRAC Regional Task Force (RTF), from the viewpoint of members of the BRAC RTF Board of Directors. It is intended to provide important feedback for the BRAC RTF as it navigates the transition from the OEA-funded planning phase to a self-sustaining implementation phase. This transition poses significant mobilization challenges for the BRAC RTF. Implementation requires much more active engagement of the people and organizations that have the authority, responsibility, and skilled personnel needed to carry out the recommended actions. Implementation also requires support from state and federal agencies that can provide critical funding and authorizations for recommended actions.

As has been pointed out repeatedly in public meetings by BRAC and OEA representatives from Washington, there is no “blueprint” for how to achieve the ambitious goals of the federal BRAC program. Of necessity, the BRAC RTF has been pursuing a “learning by doing” approach. Objective assessment can provide the BRAC RTF leadership with information needed to learn from past experience and adjust future plans accordingly. In addition, an assessment can provide documentation of the BRAC RTF’s activities and impacts, increasing its ability to gain visibility and support as a model for BRAC and other regional development efforts across the United States, thereby enhancing the organization’s ability to attract funding to the region.

This report is intended to contribute to this learning process by capturing board member feedback concerning the following questions:

- What has been the benefit and impact of the BRAC RTF to date?
- What are the current opportunities and barriers to adopting a regional approach to the development of the Ft. Bragg region?
- To what extent and in what ways have the actions of the BRAC RTF strengthened capacity for regional development?
- What are the strengths, areas for improvement, and lessons learned from the BRAC RTF process?
- What should be the role of the BRAC RTF moving forward?

REPORT METHODOLOGY

To produce information that is both relevant and useful to the BRAC RTF, the assessment design needed to be based on a deep understanding of the BRAC RTF’s goals and the assumptions and constraints guiding the organization’s

activities. The assessment process also had to be objective and rigorous in order for the results to be accepted as valid by both local stakeholders and outside agencies and organizations. To gain the necessary depth of knowledge without compromising the objectivity of the evaluation, the project team included both a researcher who has participated in the BRAC process (Beratan) and an evaluation expert who had no previous involvement with the Ft. Bragg region (Nowell). Beratan and Nowell were assisted by two graduate student researchers from NCSU's Department of Public Administration.

Through a series of conversations with the BRAC RTF staff, the research team identified the assessment's major learning objectives. They also gained an understanding of the assumptions and intentions underlying the BRAC RTF's activities and of the staff's views of the effectiveness of these. Based on this information, the project team developed quantitative and qualitative interview questions to address the research questions summarized above.

The mission of the BRAC RTF is to help the region prepare for and find ways to take advantage of the large changes accompanying mission growth at Ft. Bragg. Therefore, the BRAC RTF's priority programs have focused on building the region's capacity to anticipate and adapt to changing conditions. The BRAC RTF staff made it clear that stakeholder engagement and regional cooperation have been foundational elements of this mission from the very start. Consequently, BRAC RTF leadership requested that a particular focus of this assessment be exploring the impact of the BRAC process on cooperation and communication among stakeholders, which are key elements of regional capacity. Another guiding principle has been that the BRAC RTF serves the region, and is responsive to the region's needs and vision rather than dictating to its stakeholders and partners - a "bottom-up" rather than a "top-down" model. The assessment therefore was designed to evaluate how effective the organization had been in establishing such a relationship. Finally, the BRAC RTF staff identified the Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan (CRGP) process as having been the organization's most significant accomplishment, so assessment of the value and impact of the CRGP was also included.

The research team and the BRAC RTF staff determined that members of the BRAC RTF's Board of Directors were best placed to observe both the BRAC RTF staff's efforts and the impacts of the BRAC process on the region. Therefore, the participants in this study were recruited from the list of people who have served on the BRAC RTF's Board of Directors since the organization's founding. At least two board members from each county were invited to participate. Twenty-three former and current Board members ultimately participated in the study; three each from Cumberland and Scotland Counties, one from Bladen County, and two each from the other eight BRAC counties. Four invitees refused to participate. Interviews were conducted by telephone or in person, and each participant had

an opportunity to review their responses prior to data analysis. The results of these interviews are presented in the remainder of this report.

Illustrative quotations from the interviews are presented in italics.

PART I:
WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AND BARRIERS TO REGIONALISM?

The founding of the BRAC RTF reflects an understanding that new opportunities for regional development could result from regional approaches to common challenges. It was also recognized that multi-jurisdictional cooperation is not easy to establish. Insights into both opportunities and barriers to regional approaches in the Ft. Bragg region were provided by the respondents.

Where do Board members see the greatest opportunity for regional collaboration?

While respondents differed in the opportunities they reported for regional solutions, collectively they identified an impressive array of opportunities. These included (in order of prominence):

➤ **Water resources and infrastructure.**

Water is a key element in what we're about and success of this region's future is going to be about our water resource and how we manage them and how we use them.

➤ **Sewer/waste water infrastructure**

I started promoting regionalism because of our water, with both water and wastewater treatment, I thought it made sense not to have a bunch of small competing water and sewer authorities. It just made sense.

➤ **Transportation/road Systems**

- Developing public transportation systems between Ft. Bragg, the Triangle, and Fayetteville
- Extending and expanding regional interstate and highways

We could probably do some better transportation planning – everybody doesn't need to drive a car to work, but who can afford for us to have a transit system? You know, we're not Charlotte; we're not Greensboro. We have a transit system within the city limits, but not in the county. You could do some regional transportation.

The road issues have been problems for the last ten years, but now this extra growth is going to grow them even more, so it might give the entire region more leverage in advancing these infrastructure needs.

➤ **Leveraging regional economy of scale to compete for grants and resources (e.g., high tech classroom equipment)**

Well, the biggest area is you combine your financial resources for the betterment of the region. You know, if there is any gain for...for instance, if there is funding out there federally for a pot of money out there that if each county combines their resources that they're able to obtain a larger pot of funds for the region...

➤ **Education/workforce development**

Our biggest challenge that we see is...we got to educate the workforce for the opportunities that are coming...our skill sets are vastly lacking...we have people who have skills that come out of tobacco and furniture but not for 21st century high tech jobs... for some of these folks, the computer scares the devil out of them.

➤ **Regional branding and promotion**

The economic developers are collaborating on a regional basis to inform businesses and industries that do business with the military about the region, and about the economic...the infrastructure opportunities should they choose to do business in the region – what buildings are available, the work force, things like that are being offered, and they're being offered pretty much on a regional basis.

➤ **Collaborative business development**

We're going to have to, at some point, merge together to accomplish some nice defense industry... put everybody's share into it and supply people to work...supply the incentives they [businesses] need to come to the area.

➤ **Coordinated planning and zoning, working lands protection**

And we need to look at what is the smartest thing to do - we need to look at development and zoning as to what is needed in an area...Why don't we find out the needs and build to the needs on a regional basis and use some sanity in all of this...

Another initiative they've been working on is...a working lands protection and...encroachment into your working lands, the farm lands and the open lands. In rural counties, it has a potential impact. Regionally, they have collaborated on an initiative...for each of the 11 counties to adopt these working lands protection, and so all 11 counties are working towards a guideline to try to protect that.

➤ **Solid waste disposal**

I think waste is one of the main things. ...sooner or later, somebody's going to have to come up with an idea or something to take care of the [solid] waste. It's always been "not in my backyard."

➤ **Public works resource sharing**

I believe that near-term opportunities are in public works areas... sharing equipment across counties...

➤ **Electricity**

Electric is going to be an issue going forward. Right now, Ft. Bragg already had a need for additional electric capacity on post... Not only are they going to need additional capacity, which the southeast is already high in electrical consumption, [they are going to need additional capacity on] all types of energy consumption.

Among the specific issues and sectors mentioned, infrastructure enhancement projects - particularly water and wastewater infrastructure - were most commonly identified as projects where collaboration opened up new opportunities. The “branding” of the region as the “All American Defense Corridor” was cited as providing marketing opportunities for the region’s economic developers as they talk with businesses, particularly military-related businesses, looking to relocate in the region.

Several respondents noted that some counties had begun cooperative water and wastewater planning before the BRAC process began and that the State has mechanisms in place for regional transportation planning. **Although cooperative planning pre-dated the BRAC process, the BRAC RTF was credited with having some positive impact on cooperative planning, and with increasing the participants’ awareness of the opportunities afforded.** However, it appears there is still more work to do in both developing the strategic vision among board members as well as diffusing this vision beyond the board to local governments.

I believe the region...RTF helped our entire region become more regionally thinking as far as the 22 participants are concerned. But, if I talk to the different town councils in this county...you’re not going to see that...that is probably the same way in the other counties. You’re going to have to pull them kicking and screaming into the 1990’s.

Collectively, respondents view a wide range of opportunity for regional approaches. However, it appears there is more work to be done to:

- 1) Create a shared vision among board members to guide their collective efforts moving forward
- 2) Communicate with and engage local governments and community stakeholders in realizing regional opportunities

WHAT ARE THE REMANING BARRIERS TO REGIONAL COLLABORATION THAT MUST BE OVERCOME?

Strategic leadership for regional initiatives not only requires vision in order to see possibilities in regional approaches but also the ability to recognize, appreciate, and develop strategies to overcome the inevitable barriers. Respondents were generally more familiar with the barriers to regional approaches than to the opportunities provided. Different categories of barriers were noted, affecting participation by individual Board members, limiting county/municipality participation in regional approaches, and limiting the region's ability to take advantage of opportunities offered by the growth at Ft. Bragg. These are described below.

BARRIERS FOR INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Local accountability to local interests. Several respondents noted an inherent conflict between their ability to advocate for regional approaches and their responsibilities to capture 'wins' for their jurisdictions and particular constituents. Although most expressed the view that regional gains could benefit their county or municipality, they also noted that when it came to specifics, such as where a new business would locate, they are expected to get as many gains as possible for their constituents.

It is a challenge...as an elected official from a particular jurisdiction, your first obligation is to that jurisdiction. If you're talking about spending tax money from your jurisdiction, you have to identify if your jurisdiction is going to get some benefit out of it.

Ultimately we are all worried about how it impacts our own community. So, you know... maybe it's difficult to give up something for the good of the region. I am not saying that it's not happening. But maybe it's human nature to be more concerned about how it impacts you, and your focus be on your community rather than you know, how do we strengthen the region... I still believe, and I could be wrong, but I do believe that when they go home they are worried about their own community...I think they [board members] are thinking about Robeson County or Cumberland County not the BRAC region.

Time commitment. The size of the Ft. Bragg region presented a logistical barrier to individual participation; the travel time to meetings is very long for some board members, so that each meeting requires the better part of a day. It was noted that most had added membership on the Board on top of their regular duties, and thus had only very limited time to spare for Board activities.

Threats to Regional Approaches:

Board members face challenges with:

- 1) Reconciling competing accountabilities
- 2) Accommodating time demands
- 3) "Getting the word out" to local stakeholders

Time. You know, it takes me about an hour and fifteen minutes to drive from here. So, you go and you have a two-hour meeting, then you go and you drive back into the better part of the day, so you really have to plan your schedule and make the time to do it and prioritize. To me, the greatest barrier to all of us... is the time it takes.

Another consideration for me is that it is almost an hour to the meetings and an hour back, and we were notified late. But it is not true with elected officials that you can do things last minute. Not only do I have to shuffle it, I have to commit to 3 or 4 hours, and that's an afternoon.

Communicating with local stakeholders. Finally, a few respondents indicated that the impact of their participation was limited by a lack of mechanisms within their home counties for communicating about the BRAC process. The board members learn potentially useful information from the BRAC RTF that doesn't get disseminated in their counties, and they reported receiving little information about how their counties are responding to the BRAC process.

One of the issues we know we have has been communication. Particularly, communicating with each of the county partners what is going on. For instance, I know, and I'm relaying that to the county manager, and I'm dependent on him to relay that to the county commissioners. Then, the average person on the street... everyone once in a while, they'll hear a BRAC this or a BRAC that, but it hasn't...we haven't done a very good job of keeping the political leadership [in the loop], I'm a little concerned...

BARRIERS FOR COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES:

Respondents identified several barriers for counties and municipalities that are limiting regional collaboration in response to the growth at Ft. Bragg.

Local mindset remains competitive. By far, the most commonly reported barrier to regional collaboration was the culture of competition among local governments. Several respondents commented that while they saw potential and rationale behind regional approaches, their local governments and residents continue to embrace a county/city-centric and competitive stance toward development. This culture was described as creating significant barriers to regional development efforts.

We tend to throw up the borders and not want to talk to our neighbors, but I think it's a terrible mistake.

Respondents identified several factors contributing to this culture including:

- **Perception that development is a zero-sum game.** A zero sum game is one in which any gain to one party is by default a loss to another. Respondents noted that the means by which counties obtain revenue is such that fierce competition between local governments in some areas of development is inevitable.

...the answers may not be regional simply because of politics and dynamics of those issues. It may be that the counties have to deal with that. The counties...their revenue stream is largely based on ad valorem tax, on tax on property within the county, and the other is sales tax and other various and sundry taxes. In other words, there's a huge incentive for businesses and industries to locate in MY county. If it locates in YOUR county, you're getting 100% of that revenue stream, and you're not giving me anything.

It was also noted that this assumption of competition is pervasive and can blind political leaders to the opportunities for regional advantage.

Some of the barriers also are just the natural competition. That would be the number one thing. We have a tradition of secrecy and competition involving that. That's hard to change the culture...and get to the point that you see a business being located in an adjoining county as a win, not a loss as long as it's in the region.

There's a lot of barriers in people's minds about giving up control- its kind of like watching paint dry, trying to see the progress. But, as people educate themselves they realize they're better off as a group than singly.

- **Lack of trust that costs and benefits will be equitable.** Fears of inequity and opportunism were also described as a barrier to regional collaboration. Specific fears included the concern that information would not be shared equally, that larger counties would receive funding preference, and that smaller counties' needs and concerns would not be weighted as heavily.

Greatest barriers would probably be the larger localities would get more of a preference with funding because of the fact that they are larger and they have a larger population...and that would probably be the biggest barrier.

Well I guess it's because the way they handled the economic development projects that are coming now... they put the information out to all the

Threats to Regional Approaches:

Challenges to engaging local governments in regional efforts include:

- 1) Overcoming competitive mindsets to development
- 2) Making regional collaboration a priority
- 3) Reconciling competing regional boundaries
- 4) Obtaining funding for implementation

counties, and then those counties are strongest in negotiation are the ones that usually end up getting them, because some counties can't stack up against other counties.

- **Complex political environment of local governments.** Respondents noted that, while planning has been happening at a regional level, implementation is fundamentally a local-level activity. Fostering a shared vision and buy-in across the complex network of local leaders was described as a key barrier.

Well, the BRAC effort itself helped. [It] provided the impetus...but when you get down to crafting ordinances, zoning ordinances at the municipal level it's very difficult to relate a plan that has been written at the regional level. ...there's too many details down at zoning level at municipalities that you can't cover at the regional level...

Every county has their own political issues that they have to deal with, and not everybody is going to support every idea. A lot of politicians are strong personalities who think they're always right, and some of those are not willing to compromise, so it's a... Those are the types of barriers that you face in any regional approach...

- **Importance of local sovereignty and identity.** Last, the competitive mentality was described as fueled by a history of local pride, identity, and sovereignty that can sometimes fuel competition.

It's very difficult for counties sometimes to work with municipalities that have local autonomy...they don't want to cooperate sometimes because they want to maintain their own entity, identity. The same is true among counties. ...breaking down the perceptive barriers so you can begin to have real true collaboration, and even some consolidation of services ...I think is a barrier. That, historically, has been the case. There have been some end roads to that, but not nearly enough yet. And then, that's an impediment to a very true regional perspective.

[It's the] "Stay out of my territory" attitudes. That's what kills any kind of partnership.

No town wants to be second to another...

Regional collaboration not yet seen as a priority. Likely due in part to the competitive climate described above as well as the time commitment, a few informants noted there was still work to be done convincing local leaders that regional collaboration should be a priority.

...quite frankly, and this is my opinion, that most of these rural counties are so involved in their own problems, their own priorities, that they really either don't have the time or don't feel like they can devote the time to really come together and work on a regional basis to make things happen.

It's a low priority. I perceived it as a low priority among the leadership in the county, but I think it should be a much higher priority because I see the spin off from the BRAC project bringing some good benefits.

Competing regional boundaries. One other factor identified as reducing the effectiveness of counties' participation in regional approaches is dilution of effort due to belonging to multiple regional organizations with different boundaries and purposes.

You know, it's very difficult because when you look at the BRAC region, the 11 counties, I believe we were in 3 maybe 4 different partnerships, regional development partnerships

...it's very difficult for counties to think regionally when we have so much fractional geographic divisions. So, you have a COG of 7 counties, and you have a BRAC RTF of 11 counties, and you have an economic development, and then you have a Southeastern Coastal for water regulations and things of that nature. The whole point being: There are a multitude of different geographical or territorial divisions for regions that do not coincide. ...if you are sitting here... thinking "Ok, let's think regionally." The next question is which region am I thinking about, which region am I branding? Is it the COG; is it the RTF; is it the economic development; is it work force; is it this or that?

Lack of implementation funding. Through the Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan and other studies, the counties have learned about actions they should take to mitigate growing problems, but very little federal or state funding has been obtained for these recommended actions. Local funding potential is limited as long-standing economic challenges have been exacerbated by the recent recession. The limited funding has added to the competition for benefits between counties and between municipalities, also identified as a barrier to regional approaches.

I believe one of the things we need to do – we have to come up with a source of funding...new schools and roads are going to cost... There is going to be more crime, more growth problems you are going to have to address and there has to be a source of funding for that... Some other

counties are going to have tremendous flow of houses so additional income will offset cost but that won't happen in smaller counties.

I think any community would tell you that the most important thing that could happen for BRAC would be for the federal government to recognize the impact and send some funding - that would probably be the number one... uh, wish for the community...

BARRIERS FOR THE REGION:

Several regional objectives have been identified in the course of the BRAC process, including attracting new businesses and jobs to the region. Respondents identified regional barriers to achieving those common goals. Most respondents were aware of efforts to address these limitations, but understand that this will take time and more resources, and that little concrete progress has been made at this time. Identified regional barriers included:

Lack of a properly trained workforce

Our biggest challenge that we see is...we got to educate the workforce for the opportunities that are coming ...our skill sets are vastly lacking ...we have people who have skills that come out of tobacco and furniture but not for 21st century high tech jobs... for some of these folks, the computer scares the devil out of them.

Inadequate interoperability of infrastructure

We are looking at the physical [water, sewer] infrastructure that's available...what we're finding is the systems were designed to meet the needs within the individual counties. They typically have not been designed to provide regional interconnectivity.

Maintaining collaborative relationships

The greatest barrier is again keeping the 11 counties working together and no one breaking off and doing the 'me' rather than the 'we' approach...

We need to keep the enthusiasm of the board members up...in the past 3 year years we've seen board members drop out because they lost interest but that is going to happen in any endeavor.

Threats to Regional Approaches:

Regional barriers include:

- 1) Lack of a properly trained workforce
- 2) Inadequate infrastructure
- 3) Challenges to maintaining a collaborative climate within the region

**PART II:
WHAT WERE RESPONDENTS' MOTIVATIONS AND INITIAL HOPES FOR THE BRAC
PROCESS?**

Understanding what motivates board involvement with the BRAC RTF Board is important for the organization to continue to inspire the commitment and dedication of its members. In many cases, members were appointed to the Board. However, when asked what motivated them to join the BRAC RTF and what hopes and expectations they had for what it would accomplish, respondents described a variety of interests that attracted them. Hopes for what the BRAC RTF would accomplish included:

Capturing business and job growth opportunities. The most commonly mentioned motivations for joining BRAC RTF were a personal belief in the value of regionalism and the hope that the BRAC process might provide business and job growth opportunities for their county or town.

That's almost a cliché, you know? To compete globally you have to compete regionally, so I've always been interested in regional concepts, regional development, regional interaction, cooperation and collaboration. The BRAC obviously was one of those opportunities.

...because of the added opportunities with the military companies that will be moving, we're just trying to make sure that...our local business and industry are aware of the opportunities there.

...that was a primary thing, was to maybe get some jobs for people in this part of the county.

Staying informed & ensuring county interests are represented. A few of the respondents were motivated by an understanding that their county and community needed to stay informed about the BRAC-related changes at Ft. Bragg to avoid being blindsided by events.

Uh, I think the expectation was we were all just hoping that we could stay ahead of the curve as far as planning and implementation.

Well, I wanted to better understand the details of what was actually going on the ground at Bragg and the BRAC process so that I could do a better job here at home...it's quite selfish.

The main thing is being kept in the loop, to be prepared, to talk about issues and problems or challenges that we have. My whole thought is if

**Points of leverage
for sustaining board
member involvement**

- 1) Create meaningful opportunities for board members to provide tangible benefits to their counties through their participation
- 2) Keep board members apprised of issues affecting the region
- 3) Provide more opportunity for networking and information sharing

you're not at the table, you don't know what's going on, so it was very important for our county to be at the table and to be informed and to keep up with what's going on.

Obtaining financial support for development. A couple of respondents stated that they had initially believed that substantial funding would be available for local communities, but that this misconception was quickly clarified.

Frankly, I wasn't really sure what would be involved. I think a lot of us had a little or a lot...misconception...I think we thought there was going to be a lot of or some funding that was going to be available to come down to help some of the individual counties deal with some of the growth issues, but it's a different thing.

Well, you know, when we first started out with the BRAC committee, Paul Dordal who was the head of the thing when it first started, told us not to expect too much, kind of like what Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you...what you can do for your country..."

Networking & professional development. A few respondents also noted personal motivations for becoming involved in the BRAC RTF, seeing involvement as an opportunity for professional development and a chance to network with their counterparts in other counties.

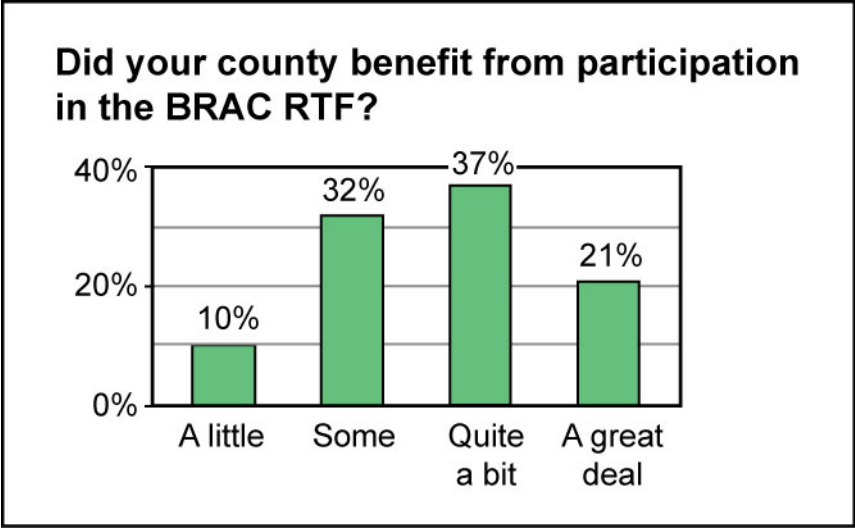
...if we can get things done here and we take part in this growth – it will be a feather in my cap

I enjoy meeting representatives from other counties and learning how they do things and kinda trying to benefit from their experience. ...and I had an interest in it.

I knew most of the economic developers in the eleven counties...the other ten counties in the region, and I knew that is was always good to network with them and find out what was going on in their counties. You just benefit from those relationships.

**PART III:
TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS HAVE COUNTIES BENEFITED FROM
INVOLVEMENT IN THE BRAC RTF?**

Respondents were asked to reflect on how they felt their county/city had benefited from involvement with the BRAC RTF and what about the process they found most beneficial.



OUTCOMES

Most counties reported receiving between some and quite a bit of benefit stemming from their involvement with BRAC RTF

Respondents from Tier I counties did not report significantly greater benefits than Tier II counties

When asked how much they felt their county had benefited from the BRAC RTF, responses ranged from feeling there had been great benefit to feeling the benefits had been very limited. Most respondents reported their county’s involvement in the BRAC RTF to be at least somewhat beneficial, with over 50% reporting quite a bit or a great deal of benefit. Those who reported more modest benefit tended to focus on limited benefits related to residential and business growth. For example, one respondent noted;

It is too soon to really tell... We are a poor county and we’re not going to benefit to the extent the other counties are going to benefit...we’re going to benefit, but we’re not going to be able to see it right away.

Do Tier I counties report greater benefit?

Several BRAC staff members and respondents expressed the belief that benefit from the BRAC would be, in part, a function of Tier I versus Tier II categorization. Specifically, the assumption was that representatives from Tier I counties would perceive the most benefit and representatives of Tier II counties would report more modest benefits. Interestingly, **counter to this assumption, there were no significant differences between Tier I and II county representatives in the extent of benefit they reported.**

What was the MOST valuable aspect of the BRAC RTF?

When asked what they found to be the most beneficial or valuable about the BRAC process to date, respondents' answers ranged widely and included the opportunity to market their county to businesses and people that will be moving into the region, lobbying efforts to get congressional funds for development, working lands protection planning, high-tech classrooms, laying the groundwork for new business recruitment, and the availability of critical information concerning the BRAC and development opportunities. However, there were two areas of benefit highlighted among respondents as particularly valuable. These were:

- **Opportunity for regional networking, problem solving, and strategic thinking.** When asked what they found most valuable about the BRAC process, Board members described the BRAC process as having awakened people to the magnitude of the change that was coming and having brought together individuals from across different fields and sectors to network, think strategically about issues the counties are facing, and engage in regional planning and collaboration. The opportunity to engage in this process was most commonly identified as the most valuable aspect of the BRAC process to date.

Well, I think the most beneficial thing [about BRAC RTF] has been it has brought us to the table on a regional basis. It's that cross-fertilization between political, educational, economical leaders looking to collaborate on a regional basis, and there has been a spirit of collaboration there.

It stirred some thinking about "goodness, what is going to be happening in our county? Where's it going to be? Is this what our citizens want?"

- **Receiving useful information about the BRAC process, and about the region's resources and needs.** A number of respondents commented on the value of the BRAC RTF in providing them with valuable, up-to-date information that they could use to inform strategic planning and to identify opportunities for development in their counties.

Ft. Bragg is a very significant economic engine to this whole area, and to understand that, to be a part of that, to make sure that [my] county was a participant in that as we went forward was [the most important]... it was very important to be there to understand what was going to happen...

Because we were able to get the information and give whatever information was coming out [e.g., transportation, education, etc], the brand new information... We received that information and we were able

OUTCOMES

Respondents saw the greatest benefit in simply coming to the table to network, problem solve, and think strategically about the coming change

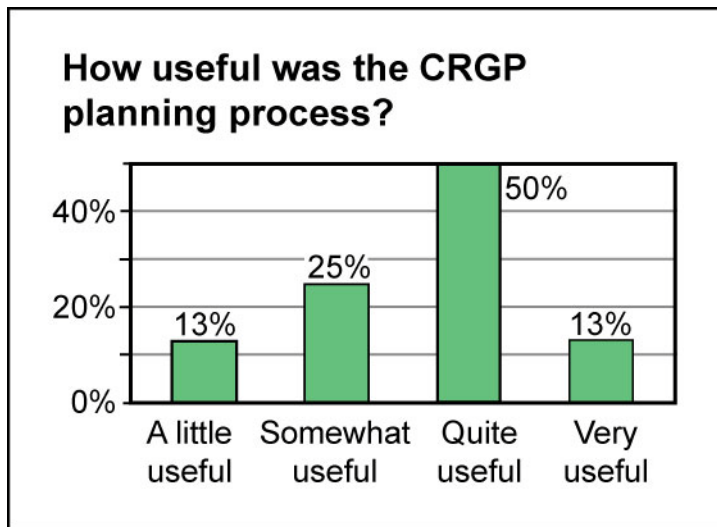
to direct it to the appropriate source in our county to start work on it, whatever the initiative was...I don't think we would have gotten that information [otherwise].

The **Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan (CRGP)** report, in particular, received significant praise from several respondents.

The report that was done by TDA that looked at all 11 counties.... was very, very detailed and served as a source document that all of us could look at and work toward making things better. That document has been used to lobby for additional funding for roads, additional funding for schools. So that was a very important piece of work that TDA did for us.

...And then showing that with people coming, how much money was going to be put into our economy from people working. The economic outcome will just kinda blow your mind, you know? ...I don't think that anyone in [my] county would have ever known what impact BRAC could have on our county if we had not done that assessment.

Respondents were specifically asked to rate how useful they found the CRGP planning process to be. The majority of respondents described it to be quite useful.



Specifics aspects of the CRGP that respondents found useful were that it:

- ✓ provided a "road map" of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for each county
- ✓ took a regional perspective but was specific and tailored to each county
- ✓ provided quantitative data on anticipated growth
- ✓ allowed counties to see where they were relative to each other

OUTCOMES

The Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan and planning process was identified as particularly beneficial for building regional identity and helping counties become aware of and prepare for BRAC-related changes

Specific impacts credited to the CRGP report were that it:

- ✓ helped representatives appreciate the magnitude of the BRAC impact on the region and what counties need to do to prepare
- ✓ increased awareness of the problems that were facing the other counties, which increased awareness of opportunities for collaboration and reduced animosity
- ✓ aided in the development of a regional identity
- ✓ provided information that counties have used to market their area for business and residential development
- ✓ informed local and regional planning efforts
- ✓ provided information that could be used to justify funding requests

Other outcomes credited to the BRAC RTF included:

➤ **Increasing awareness, marketing and promotion of the area.** The BRAC RTF was described by many as effective in helping counties to learn about each other and promoting and marketing their area's assets to business and residential development interests. Respondents reported the benefits of these efforts to include:

- ✓ Increased awareness within the region of each county's concerns, needs, resources, and capacities
- ✓ Promotion and marketing of each county and the region as a whole to residential and business development interests
- ✓ Increased focus within each county on marketing as part of economic development efforts

Specific BRAC efforts that were noted as beneficial in producing these outcomes included the DVD describing the All American Defense corridor and the recruitment/promotion fairs at Ft. McPherson in Atlanta.

The rest of the area knows we're here now – that is my entire reason for being there, to let people know we are here...

I think there's been benefits generally to the region with the efforts of trying to come together...the economic developers have generated material promoting the region and advertising our sites collectively and then if there is an interest, they provide the person or business with information about all the sites...I think that it probably gotten us more exposure than we would have had otherwise. So, I think we've definitely benefitted from that on a regional basis.

OUTCOMES

Other ways counties benefited from participation in the BRAC RTF included:

- 1) Regional and national promotion of county assets
- 2) Increased resources through BRAC RTF development programs
- 3) New business development
- 4) Invigorated community interest

- **Being the beneficiary of BRAC RTF development initiatives.** Most respondents also discussed benefiting from specific workforce and educational development initiatives carried out by the BRAC RTF. Central among those mentioned were:
- **High Tech Classrooms**
 - **Coordination of workforce development training**
 - **NC Job Pipeline**
 - **Kenan Fellows**
 - **Working lands protection efforts**

[The] North Carolina Pipeline that is available ... some people are now beginning to look at the pipeline and find out what actually is available for them. If they uncover these things, it opens eyes for people, and they have the chance to do better, and the opportunity to get involved in it in more detail... construction, electrical work, and supplementary type contracts.

One of the things we've been able to do on a regional basis is bring tech in to our school system which will enhance young people to compete for these new jobs and attract military contractors into the region... that is a direct result of the collaboration...we were able to get resources, because we had collaborated in the region, that would not have been able to get by ourselves as a single county trying to do this by ourselves

We've also benefited from the working lands protection efforts out of the BRAC RTF and the planning efforts.

- **New business development.** Importantly, while several respondents commented that it was too early to see significant development 'wins', other respondents reported new business development in their area, including a new parts supply company in Scotland County and a military vehicle manufacturer moving into Moore County. Respondents were uncertain how much such successes could be directly attributed to the efforts of BRAC RTF. Nevertheless, the BRAC RTF was seen as positive influence.

We've gotten I think at least one, maybe two defense related businesses. We have probably made ourselves better in trying to market ourselves to the military and the related businesses that come with the transition.

Believe it or not, we did locate one little company...and he supplies parts to the military. He doesn't work many people, but he's probably got 8-10 working for him. With our presence and anytime that BRAC had any kind of... program where you go meet everybody and sell business and sell

[your] County, we were there. We were at the table every time something came up trying to get our little bit.

- **Stirred up community interest and excitement.** One other noteworthy benefit reported by one respondent was that the BRAC process has stirred up interest and excitement in their community.

[The BRAC process] stirred up a lot of interest in the community, both real estate folks and economic development, and just about every phase of growth. Anything that's happened in [our] county, people are excited.

HOW HAS BRAC RTF INCREASED REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY?

Fostering a capacity and willingness among the county and municipal governments to work together to address common issues and concerns is central to the BRAC RTF's mission. As described by Paul Dordal, "The impetus for regional planning must transcend artificial political boundaries as counties and municipalities realize that infrastructure can be more efficiently planned, funded, and constructed in a regional context."¹ This approach acknowledges the value of *collaborative advantage*, through which organizations and communities create novel solutions and take advantage of economy-of-scale opportunities that would be unattainable by any one of them acting alone.²

Cooperation across political boundaries is not simple to establish or maintain. It requires particular skills and resources that are built through experience as communities come together to deal with shared concerns. These skills and resources are referred to in the academic literature as "collaborative capacity." Important components of regional collaborative capacity include attitudes towards regionalism and the networks of relationships among public sector decision makers and planners and other major stakeholders. Attitudes shape people's willingness to work together, and the social and professional networks that connect people across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries provide channels of communication that can be used for information exchange and identification of common interests and opportunities.

The respondents in this assessment provided insights into how the BRAC process has contributed to enhancement of collaborative capacity in the Ft. Bragg region, and about factors that limited change in this important regional asset. Overall, responses suggest that the BRAC process has had some positive influence on regional capacity but there is more room for improvement. Further, limited communication about the BRAC process between the respondents and others in their local governments has hindered diffusion of new attitudes and expansion of networks, with the result that regional collaborative capacity has not grown as much as it might have.

OUTCOMES

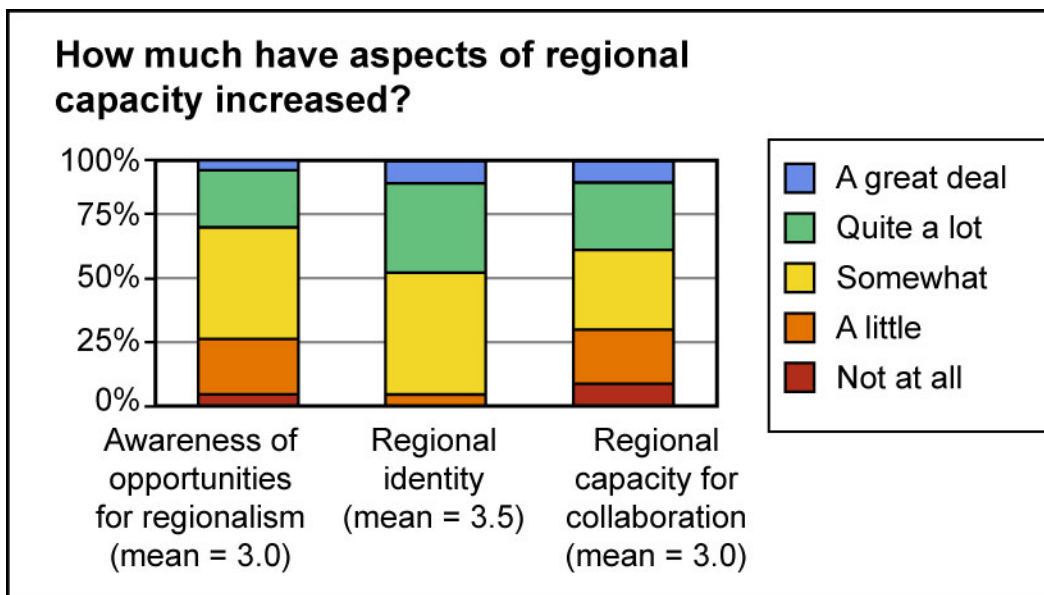
Overall, respondents reported that the BRAC process has had some positive influence on regional capacity but there is more room for improvement.

¹ Dordal, 2009

² Huxham, 1996

Summary of BRAC RTF impact in increasing regional capacity	
Increased awareness of opportunities regionalism	Somewhat
Increased sense of regional identity	Somewhat to quite a lot
Increased familiarity with the development issues and priorities of counties in the BRAC region	A little to somewhat
Improved relationships and ability to collaborate	Somewhat

HOW HAS THE BRAC PROCESS CHANGED VIEWS ON THE NEED OR OPPORTUNITY FOR REGIONALISM?



OUTCOMES

Respondents viewed the BRAC process as having the greatest impact on creating a regional identity.

Board members generally report seeing great potential in regional collaboration.

However, some still struggle to identify specific areas of opportunity for adopting a regional approach.

Change in attitudes towards regionalism and regional identity.

Regional approaches challenge the status quo, which tends to favor fragmented and siloed methods of problem solving, planning and development. As such, the success of regional development efforts requires a new way of thinking and the ability to envision opportunities for gaining advantage by working together across municipal and county jurisdictions. This type of thinking is a skill often developed through opportunities to discuss shared interests and concerns within the region as well as to be exposed to examples of regional solutions. The BRAC process was described by some as providing such opportunities.

There are some counties that as we have dialogue...we hear issues they are dealing with and we talk about how we can work together to help each other...more comes down to infrastructure than anything else.

Almost all of the respondents expressed the view that their county would benefit from cooperation with other counties, and **73% of respondents reported that regional collaboration was at least a moderate-high priority for their county.**

However when asked about areas they saw as having the greatest opportunity for adopting a regional approach, several respondents struggled to identify more than one or two specific areas of opportunity:

Well, I think there's probably a lot of possibilities, but I haven't thought too much about it.

Respondents reported the BRAC process to have the greatest impact on enhancing a sense of regional identity. Most respondents reported that as a result of the BRAC process they have experienced an enhanced sense of regionalism and increased recognition of the value of working together. Many respondents noted that they had recognized the value of regionalism prior to the BRAC process; even so, many of these respondents indicated that these views had been strengthened.

...just the idea of working together was a major step. Typically, we operate in a vacuum in politics; we operate in a vacuum in county government. You know, "this is our county; stay out of it"... as I said earlier, the borders show up. This task force, when I say changed quite a lot, it did. It made me think beyond our borders, and hopefully it made others think beyond our borders.

...the parochialism has diminished somewhat when it comes to BRAC – I believe that first people were thinking what does this have to do with us, who cares...while now people are thinking...maybe we can benefit from this. There has been a slight paradigm shift of people in the counties. They see the potential in regionalism.

An increased sense of connection to Ft. Bragg was an important component of increased regional identity for some respondents.

I really don't think that group of counties had any sense of being a group and having something in common prior to this, but the...going through this process has probably impressed on us even more what an effect...a pretty dramatic effect Ft. Bragg has on all of us – certainly those


contiguous to the base are more impacted, but even the ones farther out have some impact.

...the region - its growth, its growth patterns, how it develops does impact the base. And because the base is such a... critical piece to the region economically, you know it's important... I think unless you... until you get involved and you see how critical Fort Bragg believes that it is... you may not understand that. So that's probably the thing that I understand now better than I did ten years ago. ...I think the information that I'm talking about in terms of how Ft. Bragg is dependent on the region is and the region is dependent on Ft. Bragg...

However, not all of the counties feel an equal connection to Ft. Bragg or to the BRAC process, reflecting geographic differences in the potential impact of the military-related growth.

I think the Tier I's have probably taken more into this because...well, the studies have been focusing on them, and they see the direct impact. Tier II's have been participating, but as far as coming in with concepts of the actual identity is weaker. So, there is a recognition of the All American Defense Corridor and the...more specifically, I guess, the 11 counties, but it's not a strong connection right now...or at least not as far as the Tier II counties.

Knowledge of other counties in the region. Several respondents indicated that they gained a greater understanding of the other counties, and about issues and concerns that they had in common. However, while respondents reported that their overall knowledge and familiarity had increased as a result of the BRAC process, respondents still admitted to having limited familiarity of their partner counties in terms of specific issues and development priorities in the areas of water, waste water, transportation, economic development, and land use. On average, respondents reported having little familiarity with these areas for the counties within the 11-county region. Respondents described themselves as **most familiar with the location of growth centers and least familiar with the transportation and wastewater issues/priorities of the other counties in the region.**

In what areas are counties the most and least knowledgeable about each other? <small>(based on rankings of average scores)</small>	
Location of growth centers	Most Familiar  Least Familiar
Water issues and priorities	
Economic development activities	
Transportation	
Waste water	

- Overall, respondents throughout the region were the most familiar with the counties of Cumberland, Moore, Harnett and Hoke.
- Overall, respondents were the **least familiar with the Tier II counties** – Bladen, Sampson, Montgomery, and Scotland.
- Respondents were significantly more likely to have greater knowledge of neighboring counties with whom they share a border.³

³ QAP correlation = .39

What impact has BRAC RTF had on increasing familiarity between counties?

Social network maps can help to illuminate where the BRAC RTF process has had the strongest impact on strengthening linkages between counties.

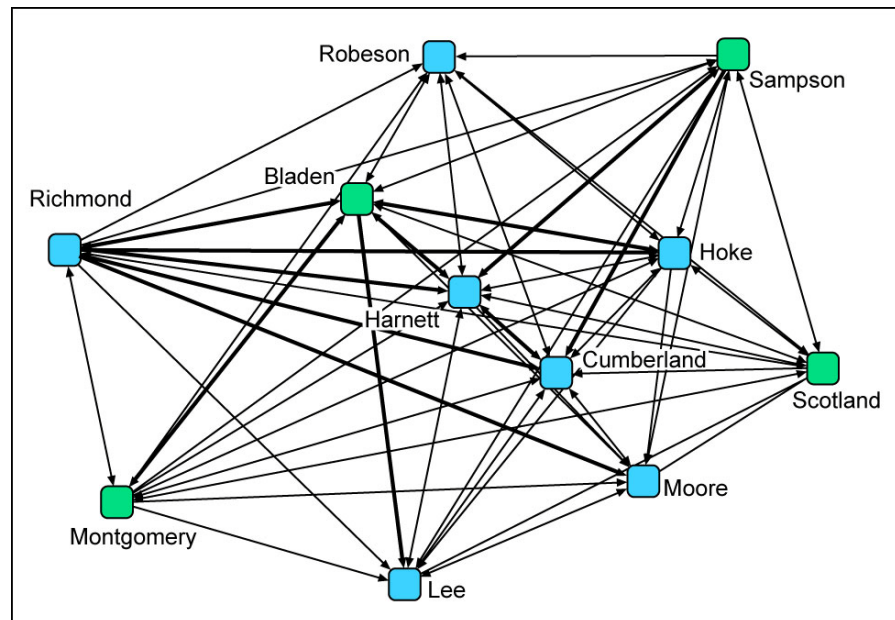
The network map below depicts relationships among the counties based on increases in familiarity resulting from participation in BRAC RTF. In order for a tie (arrow) to exist, respondents had to report – on average – at least a little increase familiarity with a given county concerning the 5 categories listed in the table above. Thicker lines indicate greater increases in familiarity. Tier I counties are represented by blue squares, and Tier II counties by green squares. Overall, respondents reported that their familiarity with other counties in the region had increased a little to somewhat during the BRAC process.⁴ The network map depicting where familiarity has *increased* is below (diagram 1). Darker lines indicate a greater increase in familiarity and arrow represent the directionality of that relationship. Results indicate the following:

- Respondents reported the greatest increase in familiarity with counties most proximate to Ft. Bragg: Cumberland, Harnett, Moore and Hoke.
- Respondents reported the least increase in familiarity with counties farthest from Ft. Bragg: Sampson, Richmond and Montgomery.
- Respondents reported gaining some to quite a lot of familiarity with their own county.
- Contiguity was only weakly related to increased familiarity. This suggests the BRAC process has helped to build familiarity across the region – not just between neighbors.

OUTCOMES

The BRAC process increased familiarity across the region somewhat but had the strongest impact on increasing board member familiarity with their own county

Diagram 1: Social network map portraying areas of increased familiarity as a result of the BRAC process.



⁴ Mean 2.57. Respondents were asked the extent to which their familiarity had increased specific to the areas of water, waste water, transportation, economic development and growth centers

Relationships: How do board members link to other counties?

Personal interactions among Board members and other attendees at BRAC RTF meetings were described as strengthening relationships.

Well, I'm not afraid to pick up the phone and call [leaders in other counties] now and, you know, ask them about a problem or something. I think it's the same for them, too; it's more of a dialogue.

...when you talk to people that you've been working with, you can find out what you can get done and what you can't get done a whole lot quicker and easier than if you're talking with people you don't know.

One of the questions posed by the BRAC RTF staff was whether relationships had developed between BRAC RTF members and key individuals in each of the counties. In a survey, respondents were asked to describe their relationship with elected county and municipal officials, county managers, county planners, economic development staff, and cooperative extension staff for each of the counties. **Results indicated that respondents had the strongest linkages to elected county officials and county managers. Board members reported having the weakest ties to cooperative extension staff and county planners.**

How have relationships been impacted by the BRAC process?

Respondents were asked about changes in their relationships with officials and staff from other counties, including the county managers, county planners, economic development directors, and cooperative extension staff. They were then asked if the BRAC process had an impact on these. On average, respondents reported the BRAC process had increased their ability to collaborate with individuals from other counties "somewhat".

- Respondents reported the BRAC RTF to have the greatest affect on strengthening their relationships with elected county officials.
- Contiguity was not significantly related to improved relationships with elected county officials. This adds further evidence to suggest the BRAC process has helped to build relationships across the region rather than just between neighbors

The network map below (diagram 2) depicts where respondents viewed their relationships with elected county officials had been strengthened. A line suggests at least a little improvement in the relationship. Thicker lines indicate greater change.

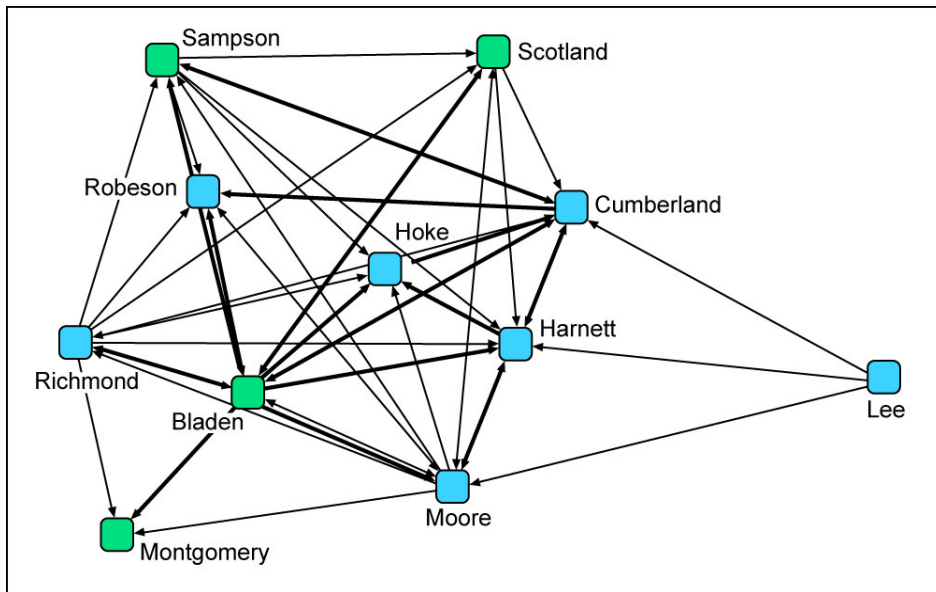


Diagram 2: Social network map portraying strengthened relationships of board members to elected county officials.

OUTCOMES

While there is still more opportunity for relationship-building, the BRAC process appears to have strengthened relationships across the region – not just between neighbors

Did the BRAC process have any negative impacts?

Respondents were asked if the BRAC process had any negative impacts. Most of the respondents answered with a simple “no.” A couple of respondents suggested that the process generated some friction among individuals, reflecting differences in viewpoints and personalities. However, the long-term impact of this was considered to be minor.

**PART IV:
WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS, AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT, AND LESSONS
LEARNED FROM PHASE 1 OF THE BRAC RTF?**

WHAT WERE THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE BRAC RTF?

Respondents reflected on several key strengths of the BRAC RTF that they saw as facilitating its success. Identified strengths included:

- **Competent and responsive staff.** In general, respondents spoke highly of the skill, professionalism and expertise of the BRAC RTF staff. Respondents expressed particular appreciation for the willingness of staff to be available to them and their county. For example, the staff were described as always available to answer questions and do presentations.

I thought Paul had selected some very competent people with specific expertise in the areas that they were needed.

I have to say they [the staff] did excellent job. If I do say so myself, we did good job of hiring! ...I'd say I'm probably more encouraged about doing things on regional basis now than I was before. ...it was a credit to the staff and their hard work. A lot was accomplished during this fairly short window of opportunity...applying for grants, overseeing those grants, certainly getting massive amounts of information gathered and put together in a way that is understandable.

- **Good leaders who brought a strong vision**

Several respondents were particularly complementary about the leadership and vision that was brought to the BRAC process by its founding executive director Paul Dordal.

Paul Dordal was a good leader - he was focused, he had good people around him. ...and I think the task force, the leadership of it has pretty much been a model for how to get things done right...

Paul Dordal exercised tremendous leadership. I have been very supportive of him because he has been very competent and has brought BRAC, basically, to where it accomplished all the things that have been done. We have been able to obtain grants. Some staff has been added to be able to assure the things we were trying to do through those grants were in fact accomplished.

**Organizational
Strengths of the
BRAC RTF**

- 1) Competent & responsive staff
- 2) Good leaders with strong vision
- 3) Staff and board familiarity with the military
- 4) Demonstrated success

- **Staff/board familiarity with the military & ties with Fort Bragg**
Several respondents also commented on the value of having an executive director, staff, and Board members who had military experience and ties to Ft. Bragg.

There's a good working relationship between leadership at the installation, and the garrison commander, and the BRAC staff. They communicate well. Nobody's working at odds with each other. That's one of the values of having some retired military involved in the BRAC task force and also a number of us on the Board of Directors are retired military... if you understand how the military works and thinks, it's easier to work with them.

It was important to the fidelity and the credibility of the BRAC that it had that kind of communication, and I think that all originated with Paul Dordal and his relationship with the military staff and all of his other contacts.

- **Board composition.** One respondent also noted that including both elected officials as well as local managers on the board provided a nice range of expertise.

Generally speaking, I have been impressed with the managers that I've had contact with. They have been knowledgeable, professional individuals who have good insight about problems we were dealing with, probably more so than the elected officials, including myself in that...they were more trained and educated...as to some of the practical issues that we were dealing with.

- **A process that created tangible benefits and demonstrated success.** A few respondents stressed the importance of small wins, such as receipt of the WIRED grant, in convincing participants that regional cooperation was possible and could produce concrete benefits.

...Right from the beginning, whatever task we took on came to fruition and that gave us all a sense of accomplishment; we say 'hey – we accomplished this.' ...I think if we'd had one failure, I don't think we'd have the positive response we've had from the people (but we didn't).

I think the economic developers didn't feel like there was much that they could control early on in the process. I think through the efforts of the BRAC RTF, I think maybe they've come to the realization that maybe they

can have an impact in this arena, and they're taking more active...you know, getting more active and involved in it.

IN WHAT AREAS COULD THE BRAC RTF EFFORTS HAVE BEEN IMPROVED?

Respondents identified several areas where the BRAC RTF process could have been improved upon. These include:

- **Improve communications with the participating communities.** Multiple respondents noted that a weakness of the BRAC process was the lack of a process and mechanism for communicating broadly with residents and leaders of the participating communities. Specific suggestions included allocating more funding early for building public awareness through the media.

One of the issues we know we have has been communication. Particularly, communicating with each of the county partners what is going on. For instance, I know, and I'm relaying that to the county manager, and I'm dependent on him to relay that to the county commissioners. Then, the average person on the street...they...everyone once in a while, they'll hear a BRAC this or a BRAC that, but it hasn't...we haven't done a very good job of keeping...the political leadership...

We don't need to commit physical harm to anybody, but we do need to beat people above the head and shoulders more than what we've done to try to get them to understand that this move is going to change the landscape for this region.

- **Do more to strengthen relationships and encourage participation.** While some respondents noted improved relationships as a benefit of involvement in the BRAC process, others commented that more could have been done to foster strong, collaborative relationships among members and increase participation. Specific suggestions included:
 - ✓ Rotate meeting location to equalize the travel burden
 - ✓ Allow more time for networking/problem-solving discussion during Board meetings
 - ✓ Identify ways to stay in communication between meetings
 - ✓ Ensure that there is a consistent set of representatives from each county

I don't know how they would have fostered a better relationship among and between counties, but the working relationship didn't always seem to

IN WHAT AREAS COULD THE BRAC RTF HAVE BEEN IMPROVED?

- 1) Improve communications with the participating communities
- 2) Do more to strengthen relationships and encourage participation
- 3) Increase transparency and manage concerns of equity
- 4) Clarify expectations about the timeline of the BRAC process
- 5) Keep the Board a manageable size.

be there. It seemed to work mostly at major meetings [but not a lot of collaboration or communication outside of meetings].

We should have had two designated members, a primary and a secondary for each county who would have remained constant throughout the process.

We need to keep the enthusiasm of the board members up...in past 3 years we've seen board members drop out because they lost interest but that is going to happen in any endeavor. [Why is that?] ...a lot of people just don't like coming from far away.

- **Increase transparency and manage concerns of equity.** In light of the large number of counties and municipalities engaged in the process, the historically competitive nature of community development in the region, the troubled economic climate, and the investment of tax payer dollars in BRAC RTF membership dues, it is not surprising that concerns about equity and return on investment were paramount in our conversations with BRAC RTF Board members. Several respondents credited the BRAC RTF staff for their efforts to ensure equity and fairness in the process.

There was a conscience effort to not show any favoritism to certain areas. I think all the counties in the task force were treated fairly and equally although some were Tier 1 counties and some were Tier 2. I think its been a good effort- collaboratively, I think it's an effort to increase the region.

That's what you've got to deal with, you know...What is a fair way to share the cost? Because in an organization like this, it's hard to make the benefits equal. You've got different size counties; you've got urban, you've got rural; you've got a lot of different viewpoints at stake here. Again, it's a real tribute to BRAC RTF board and staff that this organization is the strong organization that it is.

Other concerns or areas for improvement noted by some respondents included:

- **Ensuring that information about military contract opportunities is available and shared equally.** Respondents highlighted an expectation that BRAC RTF would provide equal and broad access to information about military contracts coming available as a result of the BRAC. A few respondents expressed the view that the BRAC RTF staff could have done a better job of keeping the Board informed about these opportunities and what companies needed to do to compete for them in order to keep jobs local.

Ft. Bragg, they brought in people, like I said, from out of town, from out of state when they could have employed some of our people here. [BRAC RTF] should have had some regional meetings where you made the people aware of what they had to do for communication, applications, and things like that on the computer. They made some on the computer, but there was a lot that they did not notify [us about].

When you look at the disastrous economic conditions that have befallen us, I think that [the BRAC RTF staff] should have made a huge effort to make sure that jobs were distributed among the counties. It was incumbent on them because it was the military who awarded contracts, so it should have been part of protocol to make sure everybody in the region had the opportunity to get jobs

- **Ensuring each county plays and pays fairly.** Several respondents noted that the success of the BRAC RTF was dependent on goodwill and cooperation among the 11 counties and that the process could unravel if counties decided to bypass the process and act opportunistically. A few respondents brought up specific concerns related to fair play and fair pay. One respondent raised the concern of some counties ‘jumping the gun’ and recruiting residents and business development related to the expansion at Ft. Bragg. Another respondent relayed some concerns about some counties not paying dues in a timely manner.

...the only thing that I've heard that maybe some of the counties were doing things in anticipation of the Fort McPherson people moving here, I've heard that some of them maybe took a...got a head start and started doing some things before the BRAC RTF authorized it related getting people's interest to move to their county versus maybe another county... Although maybe some of the counties are trying to go around the end, and get their foot in the door first, but I think the staff is at least trying to be fair about the whole recruiting situation.

- **Ensure transparency of BRAC RTF funding, salaries, and overhead.** One participant also expressed concerns about how staff salaries are determined and how the BRAC RTF has utilized its resources.

I would just like to see an auditing - an outside auditing done on the way the funds have been handled. ...If you're not at the top where you see what the plans are, and what they're going through, how much money they got- all this money, I mean they are talking about a lot of money that is being spent. They are paying some exorbitant salaries... I wonder who determines this, and is that money being used wisely?

- **Clarify expectations about the timeline of the BRAC process.** A few respondents also noted areas along the way where greater clarity about the pace and timeline of the BRAC process would have been beneficial.

I think some people thought that, ok, you get into BRAC and we talk about BRAC and all the things that were going on, but what they don't realize is that BRAC hasn't even started yet. We're still planning for BRAC; it isn't actually going to start until 2011 - that's when all the people move.

I'm still confused about when everybody's going to show up; we're already getting a lot of those folks.

I thought it was going to be immediate – I thought it was gonna be something that was urgent to get together and that we would learn a lot about each other as counties and that we would get direction from the people at Bragg about concerns and needs and start to take action. But it was done so far in advance it was like a snail's pace that the thing evolved.

- **Keep the Board a manageable size.** One respondent conveyed concern that the Board was too large and unwieldy in its ability to make decisions. This respondent's suggestion was to decrease the board size by allowing one representative per county.

I think the board is too big - it's too big to be very accomplished...I'd recommend fewer people and I'd only have one representative from each county, just like the state board of transportation...one representative, and that person would have to meet with his representatives - let him have some representatives from his county whether it be metropolitan or whatever - and they in turn would come forward with the support of those people.

WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSON'S LEARNED THROUGH THE BRAC PROCESS?

Respondents identified some 'lessons learned' from the BRAC process in the Ft. Bragg region that might be useful to other BRAC regional planning processes.

- **Identify shared interests and build a common vision people can buy into.** Respondents highlighted the importance of getting people to the table, identifying common needs and interests, and unifying people with a compelling vision and purpose for being there. Some reflected that the notion of a regional approach as a bit of a tough sell, but Board members emphasized that it was critical to the success of the BRAC RTF.

I guess the main thing is you need to pull together. You need to have a unified plan as to what you're doing, and to always remember you're not working for your city or town or your county, you're working for the whole region. That's the main thing.

Well I'm gonna go back to what I said earlier: cooperation. You gotta tear down the barriers; you gotta stop worrying about who's going to be in charge and just get it done. All those things need to happen if we're going to be successful in regional cooperation. Those are the biggest impediments you have to regional cooperation. So, I think if you remove those barriers, that you can be successful...now that will be a daunting task for anyone; it will not be easy.

- **Have a plan – growth projections are key.** Respondents also emphasized the importance of having a well-organized and well-facilitated process. This included reflections on the value of having growth projections that could aid the BRAC RTF in identifying both priorities and opportunities for collaboration.

Well, proper planning prevents poor performance, so if you plan ahead and give people a reason to come and cooperate, you have great facilitators in the process, I could see this thing continuing to work... Who wants to go to a meeting and you don't take anything away from it? That's why great facilitators and great planners are important; they can motivate us to work together. If you put the right group in a room, it will be successful.

About everything we've done has had a good focus and a good intent. ...I think the regional development discussions about what was going to happen...I think that was a necessity.

- **Make expectations clear and reasonable.** The importance of clarifying expectations – particularly as it related to timelines and available resources - and keeping expectations reasonable was also highlighted as a key lesson learned.

We talked about early on about patience. I think that's the most important thing about this BRAC move to the base. Don't expect too much out of it, but...expect low down or expect high and accept whatever you get

So when you're going through that process, make sure expectations are clear up front as well as timeline.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1) Identify shared interests and build a common vision
- 2) Have a plan – growth projections are key
- 3) Make expectations clear and reasonable
- 4) Recruit the right people
- 5) Be transparent, fair, and show the benefit of regional collaboration
- 6) Stay engaged and don't underestimate the complexity of sustainable regional development
- 7) Be persistent in getting the message out to the communities
- 8) Build on lessons learned from other regional projects

- **Recruit the right people.** When asked about lessons learned, respondents once again emphasized the importance of recruiting the right people to be involved in the process. On the side of the board, one respondent noted the value of recruiting open-minded people who are willing to consider possibilities in a regional approach. On the staff side, respondents emphasized the importance of staff with strong leadership skills, good facilitation skills, and familiarity with the military.

I think having some open-mindedness...open-minded people appointed to participate in board is important. If you have nothing but nay-sayers, it's going to be a futile effort. I don't know if it was luck or what, but I do think that we had more people who were willing to consider the possibility of the benefit of working together than people who were resistant.

You just have to have the right people, um, running the day-to-day operation because these other guys when they leave and go back to their communities, they are doing other stuff, so you have to have good people focusing [on the day to day].

- **Be transparent, fair, and show the benefit of regional collaboration.** A commonly reflected lesson learned was that regional approaches can provide real value to both individual jurisdictions as well as the region as a whole. The critical importance of ensuring that the process is transparent and that every one gains from their involvement was described as a key lesson learned.

We have people who have come to study what has been done in our region...they ask, how do you keep everyone working together? (What do you tell them?) The fact is everyone has to see the benefit, everyone has to win...no one can be a loser...we have worked to make sure everyone is a winner...

I think the biggest thing is just getting everybody together and, and, you know showing everybody that everybody has got a stake at the table and that everybody stands to benefit in some way or another.

- **Stay engaged and don't underestimate the complexity of sustainable regional development.** Through the BRAC process, members described learning more about the complexities and challenges associated with sustainable regional development. One respondent highlighted that it was important not to underestimate these challenges. Others noted the importance of staying engaged with the process, despite the challenges.

Sustainable regional development is very difficult because it does not remain constant; it varies. And you have to be able to have resource people that have knowledge in the civic area....you got personalities that get involved, you got money that gets involved, you got private industry gets involved... there's a lot of things that vary when you're dealing with this type of stuff

➤ **Be persistent in getting the message out to the communities.**

Respondents highlighted the critical need to be purposeful, planful, and persistent in communicating with local communities about the changes that are coming and the value of regional approaches.

...just keep telling the story in different kinds of ways - just keep the message out there in different venues as much as we can. I have very high marks for the leadership and the staff and the team for trying to get the message out and trying to energize the communities in the region. They've done an outstanding job, but we have not responded well, those of us who are 25 miles away... just to hit on the same point again: more money needs to be placed in promoting community awareness.

I think the model that was used by this BRAC team is a very good model for others to emulate. The lesson learned that needs to be factored in on the front end is you gotta keep telling them, and you gotta tell 'em, and tell, 'em, and tell 'em, over and over again that this is important. People have a very short attention span, and you've got to sell that product over and over again.

➤ **Build on lessons learned from other regional projects.** The BRAC RTF was described as building on lessons learned other regional projects and initiatives around the county. Respondents emphasized the importance of learning from others' mistakes and not reinventing the wheel.

If there's one recommendation I would have it's to find where regional capacity is working in North Carolina – it's my understanding that it's working well in the mountain counties because they're so poor. Maybe we don't have to reinvent the wheel; maybe we could find out how does the regional water system work in the mountains, and we can make it work down here.

...if someone were to do this again, I think they would come to the BRAC RTF and look at what they did and ask them questions- I know there are things that they know that I don't know-...you can take the model there, and it's a good model, and you could improve it a little bit maybe, but I couldn't tell you how.

**PART V:
LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE OF BRAC RTF**

DO BOARD MEMBERS SEE THE NEED FOR AN ORGANIZATION LIKE THE BRAC RTF TO HAVE A CONTINUING PRESENCE IN THE REGION?

Part of securing the future commitment to regionalism from surrounding counties can lie in understanding whether the counties see the need for a regional organization.

Yes

When asked if they saw a need for an organization like the BRAC RTF to facilitate future efforts to effectively coordinate as a region and take steps to build regional capacity, 21 of the 23 interviewees responded yes. At least one respondent from each Tier I and Tier II county saw the need for a regional organization like BRAC RTF moving forward. Most seemed to think that a lot of effort has gone into the collaboration thus far, and that most counties would benefit from continuing to participate in the future:

Most informants saw a need for an organization like the BRAC RTF but there were diverse opinions about the role this organization would play

Not sure

Those who did not answer affirmatively indicated they were not clear about whether such an organization should exist in the future. One interviewee felt that the need for such an organization could not be determined until the influx of new residents anticipated as part of the BRAC has taken place:

At this point, I would say that's a question that probably cannot be effectively addressed until...maybe a year after those moves have been completed and things settled out. ...Do we need BRAC 5 years from now? We certainly need the task force until the move is complete. And I would say after one year, address the issue - should the task force remain in place? Do they have a role? Are they contributing broadly to improving the area?

The other felt unable to make an informed decision about the topic because they felt the role of the organization moving forward is unclear and they do not want existing regional entities to be replaced.

Well, I mean, that's... That's probably one of things that I have some concerns about because I'm not sure what the long term role would be, and I also, I don't want to see that to take place of our established regional boards and regional councils of government that do the same things in terms of planning services and things like that)

WHAT ROLE DO BOARD MEMBERS HOPE THIS ORGANIZATION WILL PLAY IN SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO BUILD REGIONAL CAPACITY OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

As previously mentioned, the majority of respondents felt that an organization similar to BRAC RTF should remain in place in the future. The role that board members envision a BRAC RTF-like organization playing over the next five years is in many ways very similar to the role the organization has played in the past. Many of these desired roles are closely aligned with the types of support the counties feel they need over the next five years in order to effectively coordinate and support efforts toward regional collaboration. Three roles stand out as the most often mentioned.

Act as an advisor/coordinator to counties

When asked what role they hoped the organization would play, the most common answer was that it should act as an advisor and/or coordinator to the counties in the region. Respondents want the organization to act as a convener to assist the counties to come together as a region or to get information about the region. In addition, they want the organization to play an active role in helping individual counties and the region as a whole decide which options are best for their collective future:

That it needs to convene to come up with an action plan for the region as a whole, as if we are one big city or county, and then try to help the constituent counties to figure out their best role to focus on pursuing, and for us to have dialogue with each other because we've got to work together.

I would see them mainly as a facilitator in bringing interested parties together and identifying ways we could work together, and then staying on top of that, showing successes and how we could work together even after BRAC is over, showing successes and how we could work...I think that's one of the keys. Good leaders and all will be able to do that.

Act as regional advocate and work to secure funding

The next most commonly mentioned role for a regional organization in the future is as an advocate for the region, especially in terms of trying to secure funding for regional efforts:

The BRAC RTF is the backbone of this. Without the task force in place, there is no entity to apply for any money or do anything, so the BRAC RTF would have to stay in place to qualify for any money we can get.

Well I think, you know, certainly an advocate... for the region to the

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ROLE OF BRAC RTF

- 1) Act as an advisor/ coordinator to counties
- 2) Act as regional advocate and work to secure funding
- 3) Serve as communication hub
- 4) Provide discussion forum
- 5) Provide economic development support
- 6) Facilitate interaction between Ft. Bragg and the region
- 7) Facilitate interaction between Ft. Bragg and the region

federal government- that's an important thing that they do obviously— they're kinda thinking maybe they're an interface between the government and some of the smaller communities where it would be hard for some of the small local governments...to be heard... When you put a regional group together that's made up of Ft. Bragg, maybe they have a little more clout.

Serve as communication hub

Equally common was the desire for a regional organization to continue functioning as a communication hub. To these respondents, it is very important that the organization continue to provide updated planning information about strengths, opportunities and weaknesses across the region. Some respondents described the need for a professional planning group.

...it would be a role of information... and in turn if they saw the need for support they could apply it, but they need to have the information and know the sources of the information so if they have questions or discussion about it, they could take care of that.

...there needs to be one central point of contact that can sort of keep these, you know, can keep close tabs on these issues and continually develop the plan as the needs and the environment around it changes.

Provide discussion forum

Some respondents considered it important to have an organization to set up opportunities for networking and discussion. This and the following role were tied in importance.

I think a big part of it is coming in and making sure the community of leaders have specific venues to come in, like small workgroups or big meetings, where people can come in and discuss their specific issues...outside of our own political boundaries.

...to bring people together for the benefit of the region... I think it's surprisingly important to have the members of the RTF continue to have a collaborative, to continue to meet with each other, to talk to each other... it's kind of self-induced if you follow what I'm saying. It forces us to work on it, and I think the effort needs to be maintained.

Provide economic development support

An organization that could act in support of economic development was also considered to be important by respondents.

I think we definitely need to keep economic development group together.

I think it would be to our advantage if they do decide to hire someone that...whose responsibility is to recruit those companies and to help us in our individual counties to stay connected and make sure that they're aware of what resources we have for those companies. I think that's the main thing.

I think over the next couple years in particular, the BRAC RTF will be playing a major role in more of the business relocations and the businesses that are being...that will be established in the region.

Facilitate interaction between Ft. Bragg and the region

Lastly, one respondent noted the need for this future organization to continue to facilitate communication between Ft. Bragg and the region.

I can see the role that this organization would play would be to act as facilitators to bring military-related technicians and equipment into the classroom; to help facilitate more visits to Ft. Bragg by students in the high schools and in the community colleges - to be more open with each other because for many people in this region, they've never been to Fort Bragg. They have no idea what goes on at Fort Bragg. I'm retired military, I was stationed at Fort Bragg, but most folks in this community have no idea what goes on at Fort Bragg. So we've got to better inform people about opportunities... I think that's basically what their role's going to do be is to keep the all American Defense Corridor linked or abreast about what's happening concerning Ft. Bragg, or the military.