



Brazos River Authority



QUALITY • CONSERVATION • SERVICE

December 2, 2020

Sunset Advisory Commission
Ms. Jennifer Jones
Executive Director
PO Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711-3066

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Sunset Commission Staff's Report, produced as part of the Brazos River Authority's (BRA) ongoing Sunset Review.

We have approached our review with an eye towards what we can learn about ourselves as an organization, how we can improve and how we can better position ourselves to accomplish our mission. Throughout this process, we have appreciated the thoroughness and professionalism exhibited by Sunset staff. Their job is a difficult one, and they do it very well.

In terms of the report itself, we are in full agreement with its findings and recommendations. As an organization that must grow and mature to successfully manage and develop the projects critical to meeting our basin's needs in the future, we feel the report provides the BRA with steps we can take to make additional progress, and further the work we are already doing.

The BRA has already begun the process internally of working towards implementing the recommendations from the report. We have attached a table detailing our plans for accomplishing this going forward.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. We appreciate you and your staff's work throughout this process.

Sincerely,

DAVID COLLINSWORTH
General Manager/CEO

Attachment: Sunset Recommendations Table

Recommendation	Plan for Implementation
<p>1.1 Direct BRA to develop and adopt an objective process and evaluation criteria for prioritizing its projects.</p>	<p>BRA is currently in the process of implementing a few initiatives that will address several of the findings in Section 1. We have recently established our Capital Improvement Planning department. Although new and still in development, this department will lead our capital planning into the future. The primary goal of this department is to establish a detailed planning process. This is done through a number of tools such as our Risk-Based Asset Management and Capital Planning Program initiative, recommendation register and development of a formal capital planning process.</p> <p>An additional initiative that is currently in development is the implementation of our Project Management Office (PMO). The PMO will assist in formalizing all project processes and tools for tracking project progression. This will increase efficiency in project delivery through scope, schedule and cost.</p> <p>While all the tools and initiatives mentioned will assist in development of a system to prioritize projects, it will not happen immediately. Instead this will be a process that could take multiple years to finalize.</p>
<p>1.2 Direct BRA to provide clearer information on project progression and expenditures.</p>	<p>BRA staff will create a dedicated section on its website with all active and ongoing projects. This will include a description and status for each project. Project status will be updated at least quarterly.</p> <p>Staff will also provide ongoing project updates to the Board of Directors and will continue to include project status updates in the GM Update as we have been doing for several months now.</p>
<p>1.3 Direct BRA to involve its board of directors more directly in developing its strategic plan.</p>	<p>BRA staff will bring the draft strategic plan before the Board in its initial stages, before final edits are compiled at the management team level. This will allow greater Board input into the development of the strategic plan.</p> <p>The plan will again be brought before the Board after staff recommendations have been compiled for consideration, discussion, and adoption.</p>

	Additional Board meetings during the year will help with this process.
1.4 Direct the authority to develop a public engagement policy for water supply projects.	<p>Specific to projects, BRA will develop a public engagement policy for the Board's consideration that will generally guide how we will solicit public input on projects. It is of note that major projects (Allens Creek, Bel-House Drought Preparedness Project, etc.) already have built into their general planning, ample opportunities for public input (public meetings, town halls, etc.). We will continue these planned processes.</p> <p>Additionally, to provide for more proactive solicitation of public input on BRA projects, when we develop the project status webpage referenced in recommendation 1.2, we will also have a section or sections of that page that seek public input on our ongoing projects.</p>
2.1 Direct BRA to adopt objective criteria for awarding professional services contracts and document the basis for award decisions.	BRA staff will develop scoring matrices to be used in professional service procurement.
2.2 Direct BRA to evaluate and document vendor performance.	As part of the development of BRA's project management office and process, BRA project management staff will document vendor performance at least annually. Additionally, vendor performance will be documented at contract close-out and "lessons learned" meetings will be held at the completion of projects.
<p>2.3 Direct BRA to improve certain contracting activities to ensure transparency and fairness in its contracting process.</p> <p>This recommendation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibit contracting with former employees. • Require signed non-disclosure agreements and conflicts of interest statements. • Create a vendor dispute policy. • Proactively plan and monitor HUB spending efforts. 	BRA staff will accomplish implementation of most of these recommendations through amendments to our current purchasing procedure or policies. With regard to HUBs, BRA staff will begin the process of developing and implementing a formal HUB plan.
3.1 Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding grounds for removal of a board member to BRA.	BRA will adopt a policy in accordance with this across-the-board statutory recommendation.

3.2 Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding board member training to BRA.	BRA provides board member training.
3.3 Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding the separation of duties of board members from those of staff to BRA.	BRA has a policy that separates the duties of the Board and BRA staff.
3.4 Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding public testimony to BRA.	BRA allows public testimony at all of its committee and board meetings.
3.5 Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding developing and maintaining a system for receiving and acting on complaints to BRA.	BRA maintains a complaint tracking system.
3.6 Direct BRA to more comprehensively plan and monitor its efforts to increase workforce diversity.	<p>The BRA understands and appreciates the fact that diverse organizations benefit from having different perspectives from employees who have various backgrounds and experiences. Over the past several years, the BRA has increased efforts to improve the diversity of our organization by broadening our outreach to minority communities, improving our applicant tools, and educating our hiring managers and workforce with regard to unconscious bias, discrimination, and inclusion in the work environment. BRA has taken a comprehensive approach to diversity and inclusion with our recruiting initiatives and training opportunities, and has been actively working to improve in this area.</p> <p>BRA will implement this recommendation by continuing our current efforts toward expanding the diversity of our workforce while also pursuing future initiatives such as actively searching for minority and women candidates and encouraging them to apply for vacant positions, participating in more networking activities with minority and women focused community organizations and attending diversity and inclusion training to develop and reinforce D&I initiatives for the organization, all while establishing goals and objectives to measure progress.</p>