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Le Centre has had to execute a couple of course changes, and Gustin has some big plans. When Le Centre opened in 1990 Gustin told city officials that they should expect results within two or three years, and if they didn't get them, the operation should be shut down. "I still believe that," Gustin says. But things haven't always gone as well as he hoped. "The more it goes, the more realistic I become."

Several factors are affecting both its direction and its measurable success.

- Le Centre began with a heavy emphasis on cultural and trade ties with Francoophone countries. But an increasing amount of international trade among Acadiana businesses is being done in Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, Brazil and other Central and South American countries.
- Oil and gas companies in Acadiana have always done considerable work abroad. But with a domestic market that strongly discounting American exploration and production, those companies are devoting more and more attention to international projects.
- Companies that may have benefited from Le Centre's services are often reluctant, for competitive reasons, to divulge the specifics of contracts and business deals. It's also difficult to measure whether an introduction, business contact or just information provided through Le Centre led directly to a contract that can be credited to Le Centre's efforts.
- Like many other initiatives of city government, Le Centre officials are awaiting the outcome of the mayor's election before implementing some longer-term plans. Additionally, when the new City Council takes office, a majority of its members will be new.

Salud, sir!" festivity relaxes the aching arms and legs.

The Festival International is the most well-known and successful operation under the Le Centre International umbrella. [Pictured: Le Centre director Philippe Gustin in the Festival office.]

Suggestions: Research, Diplomatic, Protocol, General Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BY COUNTRY</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
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<td>Other</td>
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**INQUIRIES TO LE CENTRE INTERNATIONAL**

**APRIL 1990 TO JULY 1991**

*Culture* 10%
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*Travel/Personal* 8%
*University/Educational* 4%
*Festival International* 4%
*Transportation* 4%
*I.B.E. 4%*
*Import/Export 2%*

**EXAMPLES: RESEARCH, DIPLOMACY, PROTOCOL, GENERAL INFORMATION**

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**The Times of Acadiana**

April 8, 1992

TRAD...}

**TRADING OFF**

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By Jane Nicholes  Photos by Robin May

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TRAD...
number one language that we’re working with is Spanish,” she says. “Second is Portuguese—Brazil. I would put the French-speaking countries third.”

Lingua has even had some Chinese and Laotian translations. About 85 percent of Lingua’s projects are from Lafayette-based companies or companies with offices in Lafayette. “March was our best month in 12 years,” says Greco.

Another piece of evidence is the impending departure of the Bureau du Quebec from Lafayette because of hard times in Quebec and budget cuts made by that province’s government. Office director Regent Cabana says that economic development initiatives between Louisiana and the Canadian province just never got going, outside of some French textbook contracts with the Louisiana school system.

However, Cabana says the decision to de-emphasize economic development was made well before Le Centre opened—that was one reason the bureau
Working with oil and gas companies also was not an initial priority for Le Centre International, Gustin says that at first he simply didn't think they would need Le Centre. "Now it appears that it could be one of the strongest needs."

Last year, Le Centre arranged for a delegation of oil companies from Belgium to attend the Louisiana Gulf Coast Oil Exposition (LAGCOE), marking the first time the trade show had international participation. "I didn't think we'd get one company to show up in Belgium," Gustin says. As for results from that appearance, Gustin says he is aware only of one small company that may be negotiating to sell drilling fluids. Gustin has formed an advisory group of representatives of the oil and gas industry to get input on what Le Centre can do for them. Also under consideration is a conference of 10 to 15 companies that would market services together and publish a multi-lingual brochure. Meanwhile, Le Centre has been working with the Louisiana Oil and Gas Trade Association, a loose organization of oil and gas companies that evolved from last year's unsuccessful attempt to see themselves to Kuwait after the Gulf War.

Measurable results is Le Centre International's decided weak spot. Gustin admits the organization doesn't keep good track of what happens after it hands out a little advice or introduces one business person to another. In terms of concrete examples of success, Gustin says, "we can point to success stories." He figures that between 50 and 100 businesses have been helped directly in the two years Le Centre has been open. Gustin hopes to persuade one businessman from Shreveport whom he seeks a long-term master plan for tourism. "I am very afraid that this lack of leadership all over Lafayette in terms of economic development and international marketing," Gustin says. "Any long-term plans have been put on hold during the last few months, Gustin says. "The election has held Le Centre back from looking at business development, but it is too late now." He says that, eventually, business will too. Le Centre's long-range master plan suggests options such as creating an association of businesses that would pay for Le Centre, the organization unquestionably has served businesses outside Lafayette; there's even a businessman from Shreveport whom Gustin hopes to persuade to relocate.

Gustin-also-a Pork food manufacturer from New Orleans who is looking for results too, preferably in international trade, (Gustin dismisses the election rhetoric of 'do nothing' as just that, but he thinks the question of city funding is valid. Although the city council has not yet given Le Centre's long-range plan a mention, the council did pass an option such as creating an association of businesses that would pay for Le Centre, the organization unquestionably has served businesses outside Lafayette; there's even a businessman from Shreveport whom Gustin hopes to persuade to relocate.

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Gustin says that many of the most successful businesses in Acadiana are within 50 to 70 miles of Lafayette but outside the city limits—such as Bruce Foods, the McLhenny Co., Lou Ana Foods and Fruit of the Loom. He thinks that in the near future other parishes will have to pitch in and help fund Le Centre, and that, eventually, business will too. Le Centre's long-range master plan suggests options such as creating an association of businesses that would pay for Le Centre, the organization unquestionably has served businesses outside Lafayette; there's even a businessperson from Shreveport whom Gustin hopes to persuade to relocate.

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Gustin calls for a long-term marketing plan for tourism. "I am very afraid that one day the well will run dry," he says. As for the city's plans, he says, "I hope they'll have some impact. It's a question of what will happen in the future." He says that would encompass the myriad of organizations involved in economic development, from LEDA to the Chamber of Commerce to Le Centre. Le Centre's Central Business District committee is in the midst of a drive, trying to change as the impact of international business developments on the Lafayette business community changes. "I think that some new CBDC members and a new mayor promises change as well. Whether Le Centre blossoms, goes private or closes down, is anybody's guess."