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STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: RURAL PRIORITY

2006 – 2008

Strategic Plan of Work



Enterprise Florida, Inc.
390 North Orange Avenue, Suite 1300
Orlando, Florida 32801

eflorida.com

Background

Rural Florida, despite its vast area, is characterized by a number of common challenges. The per capita personal income gap between Florida's metro and non-metro areas has widened in recent years, falling from 75.9 percent to 72.1 percent as a percentage of the state average.

Florida's three emerging rural regions may share a number of challenges and equity gaps, but they agree that they share common industry cluster foundations and play a pivotal role in the growth of the total Florida market.

The 2004 statewide strategic plan for economic development is a "Roadmap to Florida's Future" and is being used by all agencies in state government. The long-term benefits and results from such an effort are a positive catalyst and provide a significant return on the state's investment. It is also consistent with recommendations contained within the Florida Chamber's "New Cornerstone" report. Rural Florida, at the October 2004 Statewide Rural Economic Development Summit, embraced a new approach to the way it conducts business by choosing regionalism.

Seven regional and statewide issues that impact economic development in rural Florida were identified:

1. Keep Existing Incentives
2. Promote Measurable Improvement in RACEC Infrastructure
3. Maximize Opportunities to Provide Broadband Solutions
4. A Flexible and RACEC-Specific Model for Growth Management
5. Regional Sustainable Leadership Development
6. Alignment with K-20 System
7. Marketing and Research Partnership with Enterprise Florida

KEEP EXISTING INCENTIVES

- Job Credit Transfers for the Enterprise Zone Jobs Tax Credit and the Rural Job Tax Credit were not passed this year.
- Budget Agenda:
 - Received \$2.7 million for the Rural Infrastructure Fund; steady at the level of funding for FY 2005/06.
 - Received \$1.3 million for the Community Development Rural Revolving Loan Fund; steady at the level of FY 2005/06.
 - Road Fund was funded at \$10 million. Enterprise Florida's "Team Florida Marketing Campaign" received funding of \$1 million, and additional dollars were appropriated for the Quick Action Closing Fund.

Deliverables

- Rural redesignations will be submitted by December 31, 2006
- Legislative action as required through May, 2007.

PROMOTE MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENT IN RACEC INFRASTRUCTURE

Fundamental infrastructure (water, wastewater and sewer, transportation) projects, especially if they do not qualify for Small Cities CDBG or EDA or the Road Fund, are hugely expensive and mostly beyond a local jurisdiction's means (economic development CDBG, EDA, and the Road Fund all require a company location or expansion with net new job creation).

A Growth Management and Infrastructure Work group will meet quarterly and develop recommendations to assist in a proactive response to the need for these basic infrastructure requirements.

Deliverables

- Quarterly meetings beginning the second quarter of FY 2006/07.
- List of recommendations by June 30, 2007.

MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE BROADBAND SOLUTIONS

WorkForce Florida chose the northwest Florida RACEC as a "pilot" project to conduct a feasibility study on the access of Broadband throughout the region. This study looked at existing infrastructure, strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. The results of the feasibility study indicated that it would be economically feasible to serve all residents in the eight county region with community support. With an initial investment of \$4 million, broadband could be provided at an affordable rate and over a five year period approximately \$7.7 million would be generated with a return of investment rate of 196%.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) has taken on this issue to leverage existing state and regional resources on the provision of broadband access throughout rural Florida. USDA-RD has given preliminary indication of its willingness to make this presentation in Florida.

REDI has agreed to coordinate a meeting with the PSC to discuss impacts of existing rules on broadband access to rural Florida. The outcome of that meeting will provide a direction for a Broadband Access Work Group. This work group will be responsible for the development of proposed recommendations to help provide additional access to this new economy infrastructure within the RACECs.

Deliverables

- South Central Broadband Feasibility Study – October 30, 2006

A FLEXIBLE AND RACEC-SPECIFIC MODEL FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The 2005 legislature passed a modified Growth Management Plan. Several aspects of this legislation acknowledge the difference between rural and urban Florida. First, a small scale plan amendment was increased from 10 to 20 areas. Second, within RACECs, counties may secure a waiver of the twice yearly plan amendment process through OTTED.

These impacts will further affect economic development at the local level. Members of a Growth Management and Infrastructure Work Group have been identified and will meet to examine more closely this legislation and other regulatory actions that impact economic development.

Deliverables

- Workgroup Meeting – initial meeting by November 30, 2006.

REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The cornerstone of the plan is a new regional economic development approach adopted by counties in rural Florida. The forum participants unanimously recognized that regional cooperation is the most effective way to accomplish common goals and achieve the desired changes within each of the three RACECs.

Compelling initial evidence of this comes from South Central Florida where county commissioners from each of the six counties in the region agreed to specific road priorities for the region and a list of these priority road projects, along with a request for funding them, was presented to the Department of Transportation. DOT approved the prioritization awarding the region a Transportation Regional Impact Project grant with one Interlocal Agreement executed by **ALL** six Boards of County Commissions.

The Florida Chamber of Commerce is embracing and encouraging regionalism as well. The Federal *Strengthening America's Communities Initiative* provides yet another reason for rural Florida to think about the identification and resolution of issues from a regional, rather than a county, perspective.

ALIGNMENT WITH K-20 SYSTEM

There is an apparent disconnect between business and the educational system in rural Florida. Students do not understand the relationship between education in the school system and preparedness to join the workforce as a “ready-to-work” employee. Students need to understand how and why going to school and performing well will help them succeed in life after finishing their high school education.

Deliverables

- Initial Work Group meeting by November 30, 2006.
- Education is included in the statewide panel for the June 13, 2006 strategic plan update session.

MARKETING AND RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP WITH ENTERPRISE FLORIDA

The 2005 Florida legislature appropriated \$2 million to Enterprise Florida for the implementation of a new and creative marketing opportunity in the three RACECs. Based on the outcomes of the Rural Summit and “7-Point Plan”, Enterprise Florida is undertaking four separate activities to implement the rural strategic marketing effort: product identification, product development, product marketing, and revenue sharing. Specifically, Enterprise Florida will:

1. identify and confirm the top industry clusters for each RACEC,
2. locate appropriate regional sites within each RACEC,
3. develop a template for dispersing the increased taxes generated from the regional site to all participating entities within the RACEC, and
4. conduct a targeted marketing campaign for the regional sites.

Customized regional strategic planning that identifies a cluster-based strategy customized to the potential of each Area of Critical Economic Concern.

- A focused regional approach for diversifying rural economies.
- 'Mega-site' development as a regional asset. Site(s) to be developed as joint regional tax assets for shared benefits (including ad valorem taxes).
- A "shared risk, shared reward" partnership approach that leverages state 'seed' money with regional and local commitments, private sector partnerships and government programs (modified as appropriate or necessary).
- Locate a “rainmaker/catalyst” project for each region based on a target-industry study that identifies primary and support industries appropriate to the area based on existing and projected demographics and industry dynamics
- Encourage state and regional agencies to work towards implementing this strategy (REDI initiative).

Deliverables

- Cluster identification for each RACEC – August 31, 2006
- Presentation of clusters to each RACEC – North Central RACEC August 23, 2006, Northwest RACEC August 30, 2006, South Central RACEC September 13, 2006
- MOA draft completion –August 31, 2006
- Presentation to each county within a RACEC – November 30, 2006
- Target industry and company specific list for each RACEC – November 30, 2006
- Identification of proposed mega-sites to each RACEC – February 28, 2007
- Prioritization of mega-sites by each RACEC – February 28, 2007
- Initiation of pre-clearance review and other necessary permitting activity for top sites - June 1, 2007
- Infrastructure identification and cost estimates for selected sites – October 1, 2007
- Commencement of direct marketing by Enterprise Florida – November 1, 2007
- Announcement by business to locate in a mega-site – June 30, 2008

RURAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2006-2008

July 2006

7/19/06	Enterprise Zone Coordinator Workshop; Central Florida	Tampa
7/26/06	Enterprise Zone Coordinator Workshop; Northwest Florida	One-Stop Center, Marianna

August 2006

8/15/06	Rural Issues Working Group	Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island
8/16/06	EFI Stakeholders Council Meeting	Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island
8/23/06	North Central RACEC Session Two; Regional Catalyst Project	Lake City Community College, Lake City
8/30/06	Northwest RACEC Session Two; Regional Catalyst Project	PAEC, Chipley
8/31/06	Cluster identification and MOA draft due; Regional Catalyst Project	NA
8/31/06-9/01/06	Farm to Fuel Summit	Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate, Orlando

September 2006

9/13/06	South Central RACEC Session Two; Regional Catalyst Project	LaBelle Civic Center, LaBelle
September through October 06	Attend County Commission Meetings in all three RACECs; Regional Catalyst Project	Various locations throughout the three RACECs

October 2006

10/31/06	Rural Issues Working Group	Sandestin
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November 2006

11/1/06	EFI Stakeholders Council Meeting	Sandestin
November or December 06	<i>Tentative</i> North Central RACEC Session Three; Regional Catalyst Project	Lake City Community College, Lake City
November or December 06	<i>Tentative</i> Northwest RACEC Session Three; Regional Catalyst Project	PAEC, Chipley
November or December 06	<i>Tentative</i> South Central RACEC Session Three; Regional Catalyst Project	South Central Region
11/12/06-11/15/06	CoreNett	Orlando
11/30/06	Target industry and company-specific list due for each RACEC; Regional Catalyst Project	NA

December 2006

January 2007

1/23/07	Rural Issues Working Group	Tallahassee
1/24/07	EFI Stakeholders Council Meeting	Tallahassee

February 2007

January or February 07	<i>Tentative</i> North Central RACEC Session Four; Regional Catalyst Project	Lake City
January or February 07	<i>Tentative</i> Northwest RACEC Session Four; Regional Catalyst Project	PAEC, Marianna
January or February 07	<i>Tentative</i> South Central RACEC Session Four; Regional Catalyst Project	South Central Region
2/28/07	Identification and prioritization of proposed mega-sites to each RACEC; Regional	NA

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	Catalyst Project	
March 2007		
April 2007		
April or May 07	<i>Tentative</i> Rural Economic Development and Tourism Summit	Marianna
May 2007		
June 2007		
6/01/07	Initiation of pre-clearance review and other permitting activities for top sites; Regional Catalyst Project	NA
July 2007		
August 2007		
8/14/07	Rural Issues Working Group	Miami
8/15/07	EFI Stakeholders Council Meeting	Miami
October 2007		
10/01/07	Infrastructure identification and cost estimates for selected sites; Regional Catalyst Project	NA
November 2007		
11/1/07	Commencement of direct marketing by EFI; Regional Catalyst Project	NA
December 2007		
January 2008		
February 2008		
March 2008		
April 2008		
May 2008		
June 2008		
6/30/08	Announcement by business to locate in a mega-site; Regional Catalyst Project	NA