

**Scope of Work
Strategic Business Plan
The Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc.
dba
“Opportunity Florida”**

Introduction

The Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc. (dba “Opportunity Florida”) seeks support for a qualified facilitator and writer (“consultant or facilitator”) to assist the organization in development of its first strategic business plan (hereinafter “strategic plan”). The consultant will work closely with Opportunity Florida, its member EDOs, and county and private partners to shape this plan over the course of a four-month period beginning in January 2015 and concluding on, or about the end of March 2016.

The scope of work includes some or all of the following activities, based on consultant expertise and Opportunity Florida needs:

- Work session(s) with Opportunity Florida staff and officer(s) to shape the planning process;
- Meeting design and facilitation for public listening session(s) in the Rural Northwest Florida Region;
- Meeting design and facilitation for an input session(s) with members of Rural Northwest Florida's local economic development organizations;
- Meeting design and facilitation for an input session(s) with members of Rural Northwest Florida's local county and city governmental units;
- Deployment of tool or process for gathering input from the public online through social media or similar venues;
- Work session with Opportunity Florida Board and staff to synthesize major themes and critical issues identified through input sessions;
- Work session with Opportunity Florida board and staff to reach consensus on organization vision, mission, strategic goals, objectives, and activities
- Writing and design of the strategic plan document

Background

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has suggested that Opportunity Florida develop a strategic business plan as part of the Regional Rural Development Grant. Strategic plans identify an organization’s mission, long-term goals, objectives, and strategies, as well as the approaches it will take in monitoring its progress in addressing specific challenges and opportunities related to its mission. The strategic plan also explains the importance of the goals, appraises the organization’s capabilities, assesses the operating environment, and outlines the process for ongoing evaluations to informed organizational actions.

Deliverable as Defined in Regional Rural Development Grant Agreement with DEO

“100% completion of a five-year Strategic Business Plan in accordance with the scope of work (per grant agreement).”

Minimum Performance

A. Completed draft copy of the five year regional strategic business plan.

Source Documentation

- Copy of the Request for Proposal or Invitation to Negotiate to write the region’s strategic business plan
- Copy of the executed agreement with selected contractor
- Completed draft copy of the the five year regional strategic business plan

B. Completed Final Copy of the five-year Regional Strategic Business Plan

Source Documentation

Completed final copy of the five-year strategic business plan

Opportunity Florida has never developed a formal “strategic plan” for the organization. Therefore, Opportunity Florida is undertaking the process of developing a strategic plan to guide Opportunity Florida’s work in Rural Northwest Florida from fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2020. This process will include the Opportunity Florida region’s socio-economic trends, analysis of emerging issues and opportunities, and input from the region’s constituent groups and regional leadership on a variety of topics. Through the strategic planning process, Opportunity Florida will explore common issues and identify emerging opportunities to achieve economic progress for the region’s communities.

Strategic Planning Overview

The Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc. approved an initiative under which the organization will develop the strategic plan. Opportunity Florida staff, with assistance from a consultant, will oversee this effort, with extensive participation by the chairman and executive committee, economic development organizations from the nine (9) Rural Northwest Florida counties, elected leaders of those counties, and other members of the Opportunity Florida board. The process will seek to include a cross section of critical stakeholders in the rural Northwest Florida region, including economic development professionals and local entrepreneurs, funders and investors, local government professionals and civic leaders.

Early in 2015, Opportunity Florida developed a formal request for redesignation of the region as a “Rural Area of Opportunity” by the State of Florida. In that request, Opportunity Florida identified the demographic and socio-economic reasons and rationale for seeking this redesignation. This redesignation, which was approved on July 8, 2015, identifies to what extent Rural Northwest Florida remains “a region apart,” geographically and statistically, from the rest of the state. The Opportunity Florida redesignation narrative will form the foundation for engaging Opportunity Florida’s local and regional partners in a comprehensive, forward-looking process to develop its strategic plan.

Scope of Work

Sessions gathering input from partners and stakeholders will take multiple forms:

First, Opportunity Florida plans to hold listening sessions across the rural Northwest Florida region. The location and agenda of these sessions will be decided in consultation with the facilitator, Opportunity Florida staff and local hosts.

Second, Opportunity Florida plans to conduct a listening session with members of rural northwest Florida's local economic development organizations (EDOs). These EDOs are critical local partners in the Opportunity Florida region's economic development efforts. The EDO's most important role is identifying priority needs of their local economic development programs.

Third, Opportunity Florida plans to conduct a listening session with members of rural northwest Florida's city and county governments. These local governments provide public funding as part of Opportunity Florida and help to identify critical needs that can be addressed by regional economic development and business recruitment.

Work Sessions. The planning process will include work sessions with Opportunity Florida officers, staff and the general membership. The first work session will be with Opportunity Florida officers and staff to help develop and design the listening sessions and focus groups. The second work session will be with Opportunity Florida staff, officers and membership to synthesize major themes and critical issues identified in the input sessions and to draft the strategic plan's mission, goals, objectives, and performance targets. The final work session will be held at a venue in the rural Northwest Florida region, with Opportunity Florida to reach consensus on Opportunity Florida's vision, mission, goals, objectives, and activities, and to finalize the plan.

Writing and Graphic Design of the Strategic Plan Document. The next step in the process will include writing the strategic plan document, in close consultation with the Opportunity Florida Executive Committee, and graphic design of the document. The document will be presented to Opportunity Florida for adoption in March 2016. After the strategic plan is formally adopted, Opportunity Florida will submit it electronically to DEO to satisfy the grant deliverable, post it on the Opportunity Florida Web site, and otherwise distribute the document as appropriate.

The strategic planning process will result in a comprehensive plan that will guide Opportunity Florida and its partners in taking action forward by moving rural northwest Florida toward economic parity with the state and nation. It will outline goals and objectives that provide guidance for priorities based on Opportunity Florida input from a variety of stakeholders, and consensus on priority goals and emerging opportunities for action. The plan will create a framework for building on past actions and activities to help Rural Northwest Florida move forward.

Opportunities for Growth Theme

The rural Northwest Florida region has historically been dominated by basic resource based industries, such as agriculture and timber as well as textiles. This is particularly true in its most economically distressed counties. Dependence on these industries as economic drivers and employers has left many communities vulnerable to economic changes and downturns. In addition, rural Florida is losing population and experiencing a marked reduction in labor force. In light of this, Opportunity Florida and its members have begun a conversation on ways to achieve economic growth in rural northwest Florida by strategically focusing activities on sectors of the economy that show the potential for growth or that have otherwise been identified as targeted industries. These include, but are not limited to, added value or advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution, rural tourism, and advanced aquaculture.

The goal is not to exclude investments and development activities in traditional basic industries areas, such as agriculture and timber, but to help limit economic vulnerability, develop home-grown economic opportunities, and diversify local economies. It should also not exclude the development of infrastructure as a primary initiative required to achieve economic development and growth. Ultimately this would expand local job opportunities, increase locally rooted wealth, and create more resilient communities with higher standards of living. Listening sessions and group discussions will increase understanding of these emerging opportunities and suggest ways Opportunity Florida can help focus resources and create partnerships in this arena.

About The Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc.

The Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc. “dba ‘Opportunity Florida’” is a regional economic development organization that was founded in 2000 representing a unique partnership of local economic organizations; county and city governments; and, interested private partners. A 501c6 organization, Opportunity Florida operates on dues allocated by each member county, local EDOs and private members. Unlike some economic development entities and agencies that are primarily categorical grant makers, Opportunity Florida provides a regional organization for advocacy, outreach, technical assistance and business recruitment support activities. No other entity has this regional mandate for the northwest Florida region.

About the Northwest Florida Rural Area of Opportunity

Rural northwest Florida, as it applies here, is a nine (9) county region identified by the Florida Legislature as a “Rural Area of Opportunity.” Comprised of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla and Washington Counties and the City of Freeport, the regional is one of three Rural Areas of Opportunity within the State of Florida , so described due to their chronic [economic] distress.