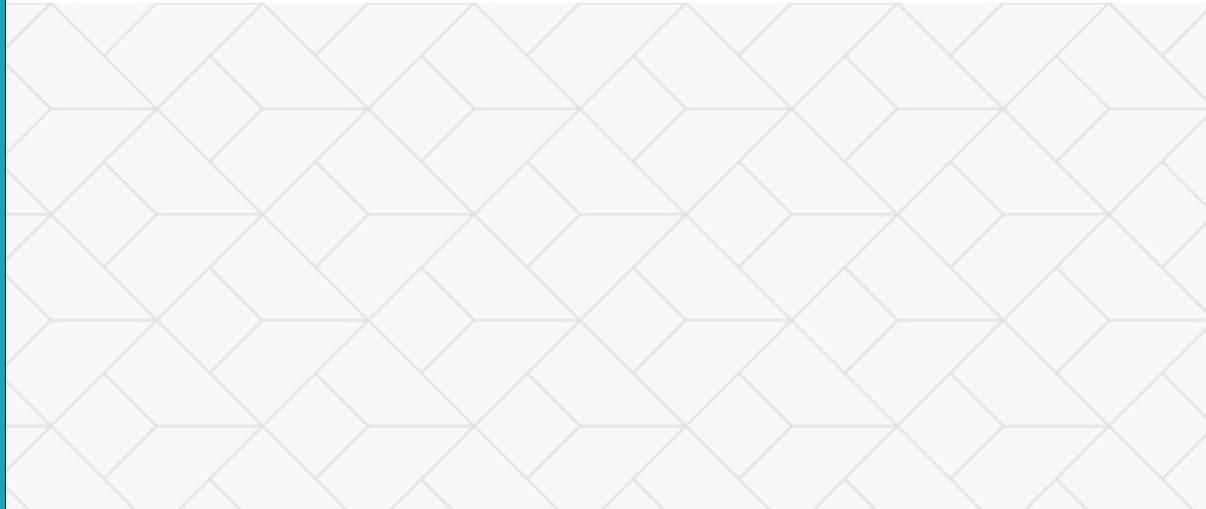




# FLORIDAWEST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE



PREPARED BY  
VISIONFIRST ADVISORS  
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# PROJECT PURPOSE

Escambia County is fortunate to be a desirable community, known for its downtown revitalization, industrial assets, a skilled workforce deep with military and defense expertise and unmatched infrastructure. From a wide range of natural and cultural amenities to a diverse variety of industry sectors, the community is primed for continued growth.

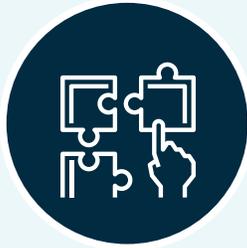
To continue its momentum, it was time to develop a new strategic plan to guide FloridaWest's efforts, measure progress and celebrate success for the next five years. The strategic plan on the following pages will allow FloridaWest, along with its local partners, to increase its competitive position to attract and retain quality, higher-paying jobs and support and maintain an ecosystem of entrepreneurship and new business development.

Meaningful alignment, collaborative action and measurable results are built on a foundation of clarity around what is of fundamental importance to FloridaWest, its stakeholders and the community at large.



# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Communities experience difficulties seeing their surroundings as clients, guests, prospective industries and newcomers to the area see them. The information below outlines impressions as perceived by a site selector. Note that these impressions from visiting a community are often the second impression, the first impression a site selector sees is a community's data.



## SYSTEMS

Much has changed in the market, in economic development and in the region over the last five years. The community is rich with programs, but stakeholders and leadership want FloridaWest to take a more proactive and coordinated approach in landing job creation projects. Without making changes, funding challenges could arise.



## PRODUCT

The community currently has The Bluffs, the tech park and an industrial park, but each face challenges. Additionally, there appears to be waning interest in industrial development at the Port or OLF-8. As a result, the community has limited product to market but stakeholders, and likely the public, have limited desire to consider new properties before the issues at the current sites are resolved. Investors want to see progress and ROI on existing assets.



## INNOVATION

Community and education leaders along with elected officials have expressed a strong commitment to entrepreneurship and innovation. Given the success of several local start-ups, many would like to see additional efforts to support this key sector. Success surrounding innovation and entrepreneurship shows a more immediate ROI as compared to traditional competitive project wins.

# DATA AT-A-GLANCE

Prior to the pandemic, when site selectors, companies or entrepreneurs were evaluating a community, they considered basic demographic and employment information. But in today's ever-changing economy, a more robust and holistic picture is needed to evaluate the potential of a location effectively. Key metrics such as population growth, labor force participation rate, commuting patterns and educational attainment will always be critical. However, it is also imperative to consider social markers such as poverty, housing costs and utility rates. Finally, given the tight labor market, identifying untapped labor pools such as exiting military, single mothers and persons with disabilities can also shape workforce and talent programs. The figures on the following pages provide a snapshot of key data points. VisionFirst compiled data from numerous trusted sources.

**FIGURE 1: POPULATION SNAPSHOT**

	Escambia County	Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL MSA	Florida	USA
Population (ACS)	313,491	488,246	20,901,636	324,697,795
Median Age <sup>2</sup>	37.2	38.2	42.0	38.1
Under 18 Years	20.9%	21.3%	20.0%	22.6%
18 to 24 Years	11.7%	10.4%	8.4%	9.4%
25 to 34 Years	14.6%	14.2%	13.0%	13.9%
35 to 44 Years	10.9%	11.7%	12.1%	12.6%
45 to 54 Years	11.8%	12.6%	13.1%	13.0%
55 to 64 Years	13.4%	13.5%	13.3%	12.9%
65 to 74 Years	9.7%	9.7%	11.1%	9.1%
75 Years, and Over	6.8%	6.6%	9.0%	6.5%
Race: White	68.1%	74.3%	75.1%	72.5%
Race: Black or African American	21.9%	16.3%	16.1%	12.7%
Race: American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%
Race: Asian	3.0%	2.6%	2.7%	5.5%
Race: Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Race: Some Other Race	1.2%	1.3%	3.0%	4.9%
Race: Two or More Races	5.3%	4.8%	2.7%	3.3%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	5.7%	5.6%	25.6%	18.0%
<b>Population Estimates, Growth &amp; Density</b>				
Population (Pop Estimates) <sup>4</sup>	322,364	511,503	21,733,312	329,484,123
Population Annual Average Growth <sup>4</sup>	0.8%	1.3%	1.4%	0.6%
People per Square Mile	484.9	301.3	400.5	92.9

In looking at the data in Figure 1, there are several points worth noting in positioning FloridaWest's efforts in promoting the county.

- The average age of the county is younger than the comparison locations and nearly 60 percent of the population is under the age of 44.
- The community is becoming more diverse with nearly 23 percent of the population Black or African American, three percent Asian and 5.7 percent Hispanic or Latino.
- While the population growth is not as significant as the MSA or the state, it is greater than the national average.
- The county is very densely populated at nearly 485 people per square mile, significantly higher than the rest of the comparison regions.

**FIGURE 2: LABOR FORCE SNAPSHOT**

	Escambia County	Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL MSA	Florida	USA
Labor Force Participation Rate (16 years and over)	59.3%	58.9%	58.7%	63.2%
Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate (25-54)	80.0%	78.1%	81.2%	82.1%
Armed Forces Labor Force	3.6%	3.2%	0.3%	0.4%
Veterans, Age 18-64	10.3%	12.3%	5.3%	4.6%
Veterans Labor Force Participation Rate, Age 18-64	68.8%	71.4%	74.4%	76.6%
Unemployed	6.2%	5.9%	5.6%	5.3%
Median Household Income <sup>1</sup>	\$50,915	\$56,807	\$55,660	\$62,843
Per Capita Income	\$28,022	\$29,335	\$31,619	\$34,103
<b>Commuting Patterns</b>				
Total Employed Population	127,161	205,749	9,442,957	151,286,366
Mean Commute Time (minutes)	22.6	25.1	27.8	26.9
Commute via Public Transportation	0.6%	0.4%	1.8%	5.0%
Worked in Region of Residence	89.0%	86.2%	98.7%	N/A
Worked Outside Region of Residence	11.0%	13.8%	1.3%	N/A
Worked in State of Residence	95.2%	95.2%	98.7%	96.3%
Worked Outside State of Residence	4.8%	4.8%	1.3%	3.7%
In-Commuters	34,978	16,440	69,476	N/A
Out-of-State In-Commuters	5,659	7,228	69,476	N/A
Net Commuting	21,024	-11,884	-54,739	N/A
<b>Union Membership</b>				
Total <sup>2</sup>	5.8%	5.9%	6.3%	10.8%
Private Sector <sup>2</sup>	2.4%	2.4%	3.2%	6.4%
Manufacturing <sup>2</sup>	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	8.4%
Public Sector <sup>2</sup>	25.0%	24.9%	28.0%	35.5%

1. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from composing counties

2. 2020; Current Population Survey, unionstats.com, and Chmura; county- and zip-level data are best estimates based upon industry-, MSA-, and state-level data

When considering the labor force snapshot in Figure 2, several points stand out.

- While slightly lower than the national average, the labor force participation rate for those over 16 is higher than both the MSA and state. The prime age rate is slightly lower than the state and the nation. Compared to many other communities, a participation rate of 80 percent is considered near full employment, meaning workforce and education officials will need to identify untapped labor pools to meet employer needs.
- Given the region’s military installations, it is important to consider veterans, exiting military and armed forces labor. The county has a sizable armed forces labor pool at 3.6 percent and veterans make up more than 10 percent. However, the participation rate for veterans ages 18-64 is lower than the MSA, state and nation.
- A significant majority of residents work in the county – nearly 90 percent, commuting an average of 23 minutes.
- Union rates across all sectors are lower than state and national averages, allowing companies to become employers of choice if they offer competitive wages and benefits.

**FIGURE 3: EDUCATION SNAPSHOT**

	Escambia County	Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL MSA	Florida	USA
<b>Educational Attainment, Age 25-64</b>				
No High School Diploma	8.8%	8.6%	10.7%	10.9%
High School Graduate	25.8%	25.4%	27.9%	25.7%
Some College, No Degree	24.9%	24.7%	20.1%	20.7%
Associate's Degree	13.3%	13.9%	10.9%	9.1%
Bachelor's Degree	18.0%	18.4%	20.0%	21.2%
Postgraduate Degree	9.0%	9.1%	10.4%	12.3%
<b>K-12 Characteristics</b>				
Total Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	38,465	66,235	2,791,707	49,356,945
Total Teachers (FTE) <sup>1,3</sup>	2,355	3,935	161,413	3,195,542
Pupil/Teacher Ratio <sup>1,3</sup>	16.3	16.9	17.3	15.4
Spending Per Pupil <sup>2</sup>	\$9,138	\$9,067	\$9,986	\$13,210

1. National Center for Education Statistics, 2020-21, based on data for reported units.

2. National Center for Education Statistics, 2018-19, based on data for reported units.

3. National data is the aggregate of each state's most recently available data

- In looking at educational attainment of the workforce, the county has a high percentage of the population with an associate’s degree or higher with 40.3 percent at the county level compared to 41.4 percent in the MSA, 41.3 percent in the state and 42.6 percent in the nation.
- In addition, teacher ratios and spending per pupil are also closely aligned with the comparison areas. Demonstrating programmatic and academic achievement within the public-school systems will also need to be a critical component in selling the county to potential employers.

**FIGURE 4: HOUSING & SOCIAL MARKERS SNAPSHOT**

	Escambia County	Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL MSA	Florida	USA
<b>Housing</b>				
Total Housing Units	141,355	213,004	9,448,159	137,428,986
Median House Value (of owner-occupied units) <sup>1</sup>	\$146,200	\$167,033	\$215,300	\$217,500
Homeowner Vacancy	2.1%	2.0%	2.3%	1.6%
Rental Vacancy	11.4%	10.8%	8.4%	6.0%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (% of Occupied Units)	38.0%	33.1%	34.6%	36.0%
Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available (% of Occupied Units)	6.0%	4.9%	6.3%	8.6%
<b>Social</b>				
Poverty Level (of all people)	14.0%	12.4%	14.0%	13.4%
Households Receiving Food Stamps SNAP	14.1%	12.7%	13.6%	11.7%
Disconnected Youth <sup>2</sup>	1.9%	1.9%	2.9%	2.5%
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)	43.0%	37.7%	39.0%	34.1%
Uninsured	10.3%	10.0%	12.8%	8.8%
With a Disability, Age 18-64	13.5%	13.4%	10.0%	10.3%
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size	36.9%	36.9%	39.2%	42.2%
Foreign Born	5.1%	5.0%	20.7%	13.6%
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	2.7%	2.3%	11.9%	8.4%

1. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from composing counties.

2. Disconnected youth are 16-19 years old who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.

Today's economic environment as a result of the pandemic has created a series of social disruptions from supply chain challenges, skyrocketing housing costs, record inflation and childcare shortages. Each impacts the workforce and the ability to retain employees. In looking at the housing and social indicators:

- Escambia County has slightly higher poverty rates and households receiving food stamps than the nation at 14 percent and 14.1 percent, respectively.
- Children in single parent families is also considerably higher than the comparison regions at 43 percent. As employers look to attract more people to the workforce, taking the challenges single parents face such as school times and daycare shortages into consideration will be important to retain employees.

# THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

## Stakeholder Key Findings »

**In Your Words** – VisionFirst interviewed more than 55 stakeholders over several days with elected officials, existing business leaders, entrepreneurs, young professionals and community members.

Every stakeholder meeting produced productive dialogue about the county's future, identifying both critical issues and attainable opportunities. The interviews sought to gather candid observations, feedback and ideas from the community to help direct focus and prioritize our analysis.

During the conversations, VisionFirst sought answers to questions centered on such topics as:

- What is the definition of economic development for Escambia County?
- What are the barriers to success?
- Who are the partners for the county's economic development efforts?
- What belongs to the FloridaWest?
- What does success look like for FloridaWest and economic development overall over the next five years?
- How will the organization measure success?

Through synthesis, VisionFirst identified the strongest themes, insights and supporting details to use in analysis and ideation of goals and tactics.

Key findings from the meetings are presented in aggregate on the following pages and have been grouped by the main themes that resulted from the stakeholder conversations. Although the meetings focused on FloridaWest and its role in leading local economic development, the discussion also covered the needs in the broader community.

**The comments listed are a sampling of the meeting outcomes from local leaders and do not reflect VisionFirst's opinion.**

## INNOVATION LED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT //

- "Programs rich, systems poor."
- It is difficult to navigate the resources available both at the industry level and the entrepreneurial level.
- There is an opportunity to better grow local businesses using innovative and entrepreneurial resources in the community.
- Questions exist around targeting cybersecurity and if the industry is truly a fit for the community without additional resources such as Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) space.
- There is a need to better leverage organizations to create a holistic ecosystem to foster and facilitate innovation.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING //**

- The changes in the administration of the school system with an appointed superintendent offer promise, but stakeholders are anxious to see the results.
- There is a need for more rapid credentialing as well as a satellite campus that is closer to targeted populations.
- The George Stone location is not centralized near the populations and employers that need it and would benefit from a satellite campus location.
- Facilitating the creation of skilled trade interns would be helpful to employers.
- There are limited craftsman programs and employers would like to see National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications.
- There is awareness of the career academies in the school systems, but stakeholders are unsure of the results or success of the programs.
- Area higher educational partners are willing to be more engaged in economic development efforts and could be utilized more.

## **INVESTMENT IN PRODUCT //**

- FloridaWest and the community have invested heavily in product in both the tech park as well as The Bluffs, and some stakeholders are concerned about the lack of projects in both.
- There has been legislative support for investments in infrastructure at The Bluffs but there is a greater need.
- There is a desire by residents for more retail, recreational amenities and housing growth that are limiting the ability to locate industry at OLF-8.
- There is little product for manufacturing projects especially considering the ample sites in the surrounding region in both Florida and Alabama.

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL FOCUS //**

- The community has launched several efforts to support entrepreneurs at all levels with incubators, co-working spaces and programs, but many believe there are still gaps.
- There are opportunities for greater entrepreneurial support in minority communities.
- Industry recruitment and entrepreneurial support should not be mutually exclusive.
- The attractiveness of Pensacola has increased, and more emphasis should be placed on selling the community to entrepreneurs and remote workers.

## **GREATER ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY //**

- Each organization has its own vision and plan when it comes to small business and growth which has led to siloed efforts.
- The splintering of organizations and efforts has caused some confusion as to who is taking the lead on initiatives such as cybersecurity, entrepreneurship and workforce development.
- Stakeholders want to see FloridaWest take a more diversified approach to economic development.
- FloridaWest should advocate for quality of place components and market it to businesses.

# SWOT ANALYSIS

Based on the conversations with stakeholders along with labor and industry research, VisionFirst identified the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding economic development efforts as well as the area's competitiveness overall. This analysis relied on qualitative input as well as industry knowledge.

**FIGURE 5: SWOT ANALYSIS**

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interested and engaged stakeholders</li><li>• Belief in the value of job creation projects</li><li>• Strong commitment to building innovation and entrepreneurship</li><li>• Robust existing industry community</li><li>• Exiting military talent and career academies</li><li>• Regional value to companies</li></ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Programs rich, systems poor”</li><li>• Lack of coordination between community entities</li><li>• Limited ability to influence military contracts/spending</li><li>• Questions surrounding the K-12 system</li><li>• Workforce housing and rising costs</li><li>• Need more infrastructure in the limited product available</li></ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Downtown revitalization to attract new workforce</li><li>• Remote workers - especially with exiting military and trailing spouses</li><li>• Align programs with meaningful metrics to define success</li><li>• Innovation-led industry and deployment of AI technologies</li><li>• PEDC structure is underutilized</li><li>• Emerging cluster of cyber security businesses</li></ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of product and public options on product</li><li>• Alignment of organization with strategy</li><li>• Belief that winning competitive projects must be the central part of the strategy</li><li>• Organization is heavily reliant on public funding</li><li>• Limited capital investment back into the community by existing industry</li></ul>

## STRATEGIC GOALS

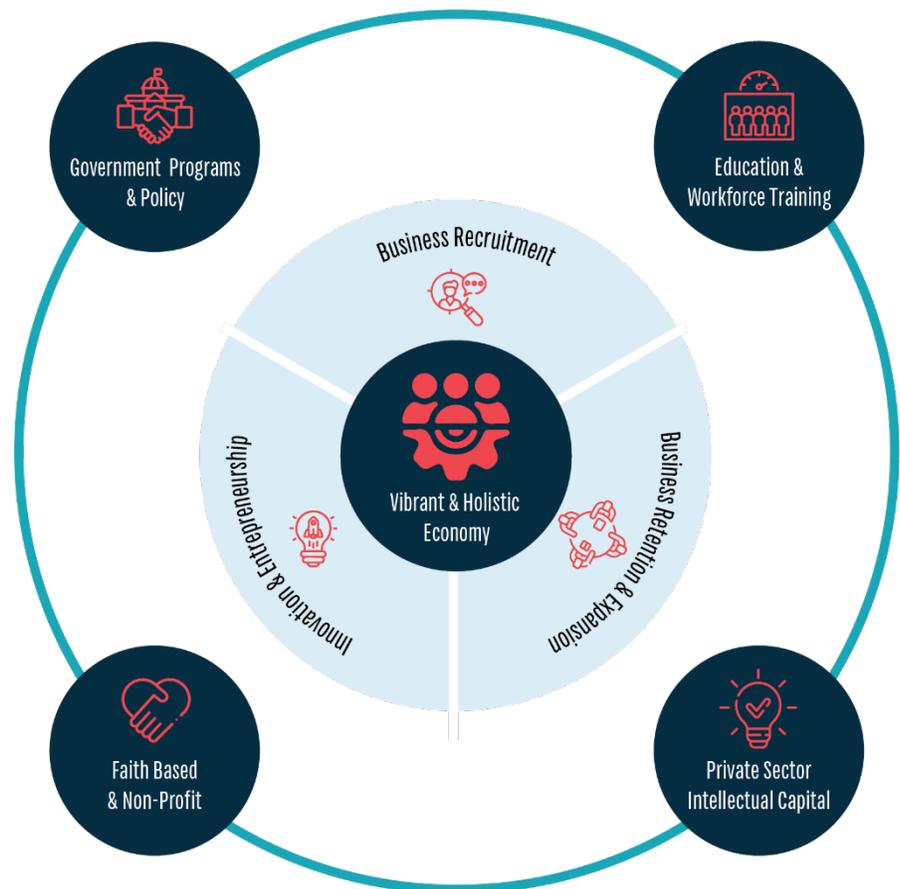
The plan's goals, rationale and approaches are designed to build connectivity among stakeholders and guide the trajectory of economic development and community success. It builds upon previous plans and actions taken by FloridaWest. Each goal aims to serve as a road map to move the organization forward in addressing the opportunities and challenges of economic development in the county, region and state.

In addition, VisionFirst reviewed FloridaWest's current organizational structure to assess effectiveness in aligning assets, talent and resources to be competitive for jobs and investment compared to the needs and priorities of the county.

The three goals are supported by its own rationale and approaches.

1. **Business Recruitment:** Develop a systematic approach to business development and recruitment that aligns with industry assets, intellectual capital and existing product.
2. **Business Retention & Expansion:** Refine and deliver a robust BR&E program that is built upon ongoing customer feedback, market intelligence and data, leading to an existing industry base that continually invests in the location and its workforce.
3. **Innovation & Entrepreneurship:** Facilitate programmatic solutions that support innovation and entrepreneurship utilizing existing spaces, programs, partners and initiatives.

With each of the strategic goals is the need for coordination between FloridaWest and its community partners. A cross-cutting strategy along all three strategic goals is **Strengthened Organizational Capacity.**



## GOALS, RATIONALE & APPROACHES

### PREPARE, PURSUE & PARTNER //

In developing the goals and approaches, they have been segmented into three categories – prepare, pursue and partner.

- **Prepare** represents the foundational items that need to be aligned before outreach and engagement.
- **Pursue** represents the tools and partners needed to be successful in achieving the desired outcomes.
- **Partner** represents the entities FloridaWest should coordinate with to eliminate silos and create transformations.

### Goal 1: Business Recruitment »

*Develop a systematic approach to business development and recruitment that aligns with industry assets, intellectual capital and existing product.*

### RATIONALE //

A foundational pillar of FloridaWest's activities is the recruitment of new companies, jobs and capital investment in the county. While business recruitment strategies and the partners involved may vary widely from one location to the next, the main tenants of any recruitment approach remain the same. A community must know its product, that product must be relentlessly marketed, and the community must deliver a sales-focused, customer-centric approach.

However, the pandemic changed the way businesses approach site selection. From supply chain to talent evaluation, there is significant uncertainty affecting the deployment of capital. While access to talent and speed to market remain consistent drivers to the process, risk or perhaps even more important, perceived risk of a project location, is often the measuring stick between competitive locations.

In addition, access to information on sites, products and assets must be readily available for prospective companies. This means more options are being considered and those regions that are not laser focused will be less competitive. Therefore, a clearly defined business recruitment strategy centered around the community's target industries and assets is critical for Escambia County to win competitive project locations.

## APPROACHES //

Considering FloridaWest’s targeted industries and assets, business recruitment approaches are categorized by sectors: Information Technology & Cyber Security, Aerospace & Defense and Heavy Manufacturing & Chemicals.



### Information Technology & Cybersecurity Approaches Snapshot

PREPARE		
<b>Existing Assets &amp; Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Create industry roundtables</li> <li>– Create a regional federal procurement initiative</li> <li>– Engage Florida congressional delegation to advocate for the community</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pursue development of office space at Corry Station</li> <li>– Develop a strategy for creating a SCIF</li> <li>– Explore federal funding opportunities to develop the Tech Park</li> <li>– Ensure local control or options for available product</li> </ul>	<b>Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expand educational cyber and coding programs</li> <li>– Leverage federal digital literacy funding to target minority populations</li> <li>– Advocate for a workforce program to assist exiting military</li> <li>– Enhance communications by developing a schedule for discussion with participants of ITEN Wired about regional talent recruitment opportunities</li> </ul>
PURSUE		
<b>Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Partner with UWF and military partners to identify opportunities for innovative solutions through procurement opportunities</li> <li>– Engage Navy Federal Credit Union to identify opportunities to design creative programs in the fintech sector that utilize cybersecurity skills and companies</li> <li>– Continue to engage Northwest Florida’s legislative leadership to secure a cybersecurity center to support the Florida Digital Service in the Department of Management Services</li> </ul>	<b>Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Create a marketing initiative to lure talent from high-cost locations</li> <li>– Create marketing materials that highlight the number of graduates that stay in the community</li> <li>– Redesign the Cyber Coast website</li> <li>– Develop an online resource guide that provides inventories of assets to support the industry and current job openings in the industry to the region</li> <li>– Enhance communication and outreach about the opportunity for IT/cybersecurity companies to use Co:Lab to transition into the region</li> </ul>	
PARTNER		
PEDC, University of West Florida, Institute of Human and Machine Cognition, Pensacola State College, Triumph Board, Existing Industry, Congressional Delegation, Military Base Leadership, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Florida’s Great Northwest, CareerSource		

The Information Technology and Cybersecurity sector remains a prime target for job creation and capital investment. In October 2017, a report called [A Cybersecurity Strategic Plan for Pensacola](#) was produced for FloridaWest with a goals and strategies matrix. While much of this plan is being implemented, stakeholders have no regular communication about the activities, progress and success of the efforts being undertaken. In considering how to best approach the industry over the next three to five years, a priority should be placed on developing a collaborative approach, focused on the intended audiences utilizing proactive outreach.

## **PREPARE:** EXISTING ASSETS & RESOURCES

- Foster information sharing by companies within the existing cybersecurity cluster. Currently, FloridaWest supports this through an informal gathering coordinated by its consultant. To supplement these conversations, a formal regional effort should be developed utilizing roundtable discussions. The focus of conversation should be the needs of the cluster and procurement opportunities.
- Create a regional procurement initiative to increase the opportunities for regional IT and cybersecurity firms to participate in federal initiatives and compete for procurement opportunities.
- Engage Florida congressional delegation in the discussion by coordinating regional trips to Washington, D.C. to advocate for opportunities and enhance missions in Northwest Florida.

## **PREPARE:** PRODUCT

- Pursue the feasibility of adding office space near Corry Station for cybersecurity companies.
- Devise a strategy to provide access to a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) in the region.
- Aggressively explore federal funding opportunities to utilize the Tech Park for supporting the cluster. **Best Practice:** [Maryland Opportunity Zone Enhancement Program for cybersecurity companies.](#)
- For new and existing product, ensure that FloridaWest has local control or options to mitigate risk and timelines for prospects.

## **PREPARE:** TALENT

- Expand cyber programs in middle schools and high schools in the county along with UWF's cyber summer camp program as well as into higher education, creating a visible education ladder. Ensure outreach is placed on developing coding skills in students, specifically those in underserved and underrepresented populations. **Best Practice:** [CyberNYC](#)
- Leverage federal digital literacy funding to target minority populations to help expand existing cyber programs.
- Advocate for a workforce program to assist exiting military members who may already have certifications and security clearances to transition to the civilian cyber workforce. Explore using the [DOD SkillBridge](#) program.
- Enhance communications by developing a schedule for discussion with participants of ITEN Wired about regional talent recruitment opportunities in the industry.

## **PURSUE:** INNOVATION

- Connect with UWF and military partners to identify opportunities for innovative solutions through procurement opportunities.
- Engage Navy Federal Credit Union to identify opportunities to design creative programs in the Fintech sector that utilize cybersecurity skills and companies in the region.

- Continue to engage Northwest Florida’s legislative leadership to secure a cybersecurity center to support Florida Digital Service in the State of Florida Department of Management Services.

**PURSUE:** MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- Create a marketing initiative in cooperation with existing industry to target talent in high-cost locations that would consider moving to the region for a job in the sector.
- Communicate to prospective companies the number of graduates from UWF and PSC programs that accept employment in Escambia County or Northwest Florida in targeted marketing materials.
- Redesign the Cyber Coast website to align with targeted objectives specifically focus on the intended audience. **Best Practice:** [Cyber Huntsville, a Tennessee Valley Initiative](#)
- Develop an online resource guide that provides inventories of assets to support the industry and current job openings in the industry to the region.
- Enhance communication and outreach about the opportunity for IT/cybersecurity companies to use Co:Lab to transition into the region.

**PARTNER:**

- PEDC, University of West Florida, Institute of Human and Machine Cognition, Pensacola State College, Triumph Board, Existing Industry, Congressional Delegation, Military Base Leadership, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Florida’s Great Northwest, CareerSource, Escambia County Schools (Career Academies)



## Aerospace & Defense

### Approaches Snapshot

PREPARE		
<b>Existing Assets &amp; Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Maintain and expand relationships with large aerospace and defense companies</li> <li>– Identify opportunities to support the Air Force's KC-Y refueling tanker competition</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promote sites within the 300 remaining acres at the airport</li> <li>– Expand investment in additional sites and buildings along I-10</li> <li>– Explore opportunities for light manufacturing defense projects at the OLF-8 site</li> <li>– Explore foreign direct investment opportunities and projects</li> </ul>	<b>Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expand career pathway opportunities to MRO jobs in public school systems and colleges</li> <li>– Asset map the existing workforce programs for strengths and gaps</li> <li>– Leverage Governor's \$20 million in state funding for upskilling for veterans</li> </ul>
PURSUE		
<b>Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Facilitate conversations with military assets regarding research laboratories</li> </ul>	<b>Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coordinate with Florida's Great Northwest to show the availability and skills of exiting military in the region</li> <li>– Partner with state veteran organizations along with workforce and business officials to host a regional veteran and military spouse career fair</li> <li>– Attend targeted conferences and events to promote the cluster</li> </ul>	
PARTNER		
PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), Triumph Board, Existing Industry, CareerSource, Congressional Delegation, Military Base Leadership, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Florida's Great Northwest, CareerSource		

Given the military presence in Escambia County and the region, Aerospace & Defense should be a primary targeted industry. Pensacola International Airport is home to ST Engineering, which operates a maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility on site while other companies such as Boeing, BAE Systems, Leonardo DRS and Vertex Aerospace have significant investment in Northwest Florida. Within proximity to Pensacola are four others in the top 10 in revenue growth for aerospace and defense companies in 2021: Raytheon, Airbus, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin, the largest defense employer in the state.<sup>1</sup> Escambia County's location on I-10 also makes the sector a desirable target with large defense companies and military assets along a 200 mile stretch from Walton County, Florida to Harrison County, Mississippi.

#### **PREPARE: EXISTING ASSETS & RESOURCES**

- Maintain and expand relationships with large aerospace and defense companies in the region and state. As the commercial aviation sector grows along with the increased demand for newer more efficient aircraft, the Airbus facility in Mobile offers supplier opportunities surrounding the A320 and A220 series aircraft for the Pensacola region.

<sup>1</sup> [2022 PwC's Global Aerospace and Defense: Annual Industry Performance and Outlook](#)

- Identify opportunities to support the Air Force's KC-Y refueling tanker competition. Lockheed Martin is partnering with Airbus to provide an aircraft version built from a modified A330 which will provide additional opportunities in the Mobile market.

**PREPARE: PRODUCT**

- Promote sites within the 300 remaining acres at Pensacola International Airport specifically to aerospace and defense companies, highlighting the assets that position the area above other locations.
- Expand investment in additional sites and buildings along I-10 to attract the sector.
- Explore opportunities for light manufacturing defense projects at the OLF-8 site such as drones, navigation systems, satellites, etc.
- Explore foreign direct investment opportunities and projects with companies like Israel Aerospace Industries.

**PREPARE: TALENT**

- Expand career pathway opportunities to MRO jobs in public school systems and colleges. Advocate for the development of trailing locations throughout the county to eliminate transportation barriers to programs.
- Asset map the existing workforce programs for strengths and gaps in programs and trainings to support retention and expansion.
- Leverage the Governor's [\\$20 million in state funding](#) for upskilling for veterans and support aviation, aerospace and defense industries.

**PURSUE: INNOVATION**

- Facilitate conversations with military assets regarding research laboratories such as the [US Naval Research Laboratory](#) and [AFWERX](#) to explore opportunities for partnerships and events around remote sensing, space science, ocean sciences and more.

**PURSUE: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

- Coordinate with Florida's Great Northwest to create detailed reports to show the availability and skills of exiting military in the region.
- Partner with state veteran organizations along with workforce and business officials to host a regional veteran and military spouse career fair. **Best Practice:** [Fairfax County Economic Development Authority](#)
- Attend targeted conferences and events to promote Escambia County's aviation and defense cluster and associated assets and sites with a goal of at least two each year.

**PARTNER:**

- PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), Triumph Board, Existing Industry, CareerSource, Congressional Delegation, Military Base Leadership, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Florida's Great Northwest, CareerSource



## Manufacturing & Chemical Approaches Snapshot

PREPARE		
<b>Existing Assets &amp; Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and target industry sectors that are large users of water in a process such as painting/coatings, electrical components and agricultural chemical</li> <li>Identify companies for onshoring opportunities including the chemical industry and rubber manufacturing sector</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target a high-water user for location at The Bluffs</li> <li>Create a working group to develop a more formal commitment letter or agreement to terms of sale of property within The Bluffs to a prospective company</li> <li>Develop budget for masterplan of the park and routinely monitor with FloridaWest and PEDC boards</li> </ul>	<b>Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with training providers about creating programs that could be located on site and could supplement employer specific efforts</li> <li>Conduct a wage survey comparing local and national averages to facilitate a meaningful conversation about wages and benefits in today's workforce</li> <li>Encourage employment outreach events that would increase the number of women in manufacturing</li> </ul>
PURSUE		
<b>Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for targeted niche recruitment around chemical manufacturing and the automotive industry</li> <li>Explore opportunities to co-locate research and development activities of existing industry with educational partners such as UWF and FSU</li> </ul>	<b>Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight and illustrate the chemical manufacturing cluster in Escambia County along with talent metrics and information about The Bluffs in targeted marketing campaign to key site selectors</li> </ul>	
PARTNER		
PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), Triumph Board, CareerSource, Existing Industry, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Florida's Great Northwest, CareerSource		

Chemical products are essential to the production of a myriad of manufacturing goods and supply chains. According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, more than 96 percent of all manufactured goods are directly touched by the chemicals industry. Given that most production of basic chemicals is concentrated along the Gulf Coast, where petroleum and natural gas feedstocks are available in refineries, FloridaWest has the opportunity for additional expansion in the industry given its existing cluster and the potential for location within The Bluffs.

### PREPARE: EXISTING ASSETS & RESOURCES

- Identify and target industry sectors that are large users of water in a process such as painting/coatings, electrical components and agricultural chemical.
- Identify companies for onshoring opportunities including the chemical industry (NAICS 325) and rubber manufacturing sector (NAICS 326).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [Key Trends to Impact the Chemical Enterprise in the Near Future](#)

## **PREPARE: PRODUCT**

- Target a high-water user for location at The Bluffs as one of the owner restrictions of the site is the requirement to be a significant user of effluent water with a current excess capacity of four million gallons per day.
- Create a working group to develop a more formal commitment letter or agreement to terms of sale of property within The Bluffs to a prospective company.
- Develop budget for masterplan of the park and routinely monitor with FloridaWest and PEDC boards.

## **PREPARE: TALENT**

- Coordinate with training providers about creating programs that could be located on site and could supplement employer specific efforts. In conversations with existing industry, the discussions centered around the same national trends many employers are seeing with labor shortages and high turnover.
- Conduct a wage survey comparing local and national averages to facilitate a meaningful conversation about wages and benefits in today's workforce.
- Encourage the development of employment outreach events that would increase the number of women in manufacturing. According to the 2020 Women in Manufacturing Benchmark Study, women constitute one of the U.S. manufacturing industry's largest pools of untapped talent. **Best Practice:** [West Virginia Women Work](#)

## **PURSUE: INNOVATION**

- Explore opportunities for targeted niche recruitment around chemical manufacturing and the automotive industry. According to the American Chemistry Chemical, light vehicles are an important end-use market for chemistry, with over \$3,200 in chemistry per vehicle.<sup>3</sup>
- Explore opportunities to co-locate research and development activities of existing industry with educational partners such as UWF and FSU.

## **PURSUE: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

- Highlight and illustrate the chemical manufacturing cluster in Escambia County along with talent metrics and information about The Bluffs in targeted marketing campaign to key site selectors. Utilize print, digital media and personal outreach.

## **PARTNER:**

- PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), Triumph Board, CareerSource, Existing Industry, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Florida's Great Northwest, CareerSource

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<sup>3</sup> [American Chemistry Council](#)

## Goal 2: Business Retention & Expansion »

*Refine and deliver a robust business retention and expansion (BR&E) program that is built upon ongoing customer feedback, market intelligence and data, leading to an existing industry base that continually invests in the location and its workforce.*

### RATIONALE //

The health of a community's existing industry has long been a leading indicator of the overall state of that local economy. If local businesses are growing, the economy will soon follow suit. Increased existing industry outreach, at its core, will invariably lead to three main benefits:

1. **Business Intelligence.** FloridaWest will become aware of issues and obstacles early in its relationship with the company, allowing time to address any challenges. The same can be said of opportunities for growth.
2. **Community Evaluation.** Valuable information related to business climate and labor supply will be provided. For example, a company's struggles can help provide a roadmap for Escambia County to remain competitive in the market.
3. **Location Marketing.** FloridaWest will establish positive relationships with local company officials and will create community business ambassadors to a host of potential prospects augmenting FloridaWest's limited staff.

At the end of a successful BR&E strategy is an improved business climate for the existing industry. Their challenges become the community's challenges, but so do their opportunities. Not every company they are competing with in the market has that kind of support structure in the local community. Having local leadership engaged will ultimately help to make the company become more competitive in its own industry.

## APPROACHES //



### Business Retention & Expansion Approaches Snapshot

PREPARE		
<b>Existing Assets &amp; Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conduct one-on-one visits with businesses utilizing a survey tool to focus on the needs of the company and its employees</li> <li>– Analyze all data and develop action plans to define the priorities for existing business</li> <li>– Host employer roundtable with agendas designed to maximize dialogue leading to specific action items</li> <li>– Create monthly confidential forum for key leadership of major employers to create information exchanges on key topics</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Utilize existing industry visits to understand and identify product to facilitate expansion and continued site investment</li> <li>– Develop a comprehensive product inventory and assessment related to current industry needs that can facilitate expansion opportunities</li> </ul>	<b>Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Serve as an employee and talent liaison and advocate</li> <li>– Partner with entities to identify pockets of untapped talent in the community including veterans, displaced homemakers, formerly incarcerated and people with special needs</li> </ul>
PURSUE		
<b>Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Celebrate the importance of manufacturing to the region through an existing appreciation event annually. Release a scorecard at the event highlighting payroll, private investment and fiscal impact the employers contribute to the region.</li> <li>– Establish an Existing Industry Committee of the board to focus on supporting the needs of existing companies in the targeted sectors within the county.</li> </ul>		
PARTNER		
PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), Achieve Escambia, CareerSource, Existing Industry, Department of Veteran's Affairs, Local Law Enforcement, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Gulf Coast Minority Chamber of Commerce		

#### PREPARE: EXISTING ASSETS & RESOURCES

- Conduct 50 annual one-on-one visits with businesses utilizing a survey tool to focus on the needs of the company and its employees. Identify and address companies at risk and potential expansion opportunities. It must be designed to elicit honest feedback that can be used to help both the company and the community. The results of the survey will be confidential and analyzed only by the FloridaWest. All results should be recorded in the CRM system leading to a database of business intelligence.
- Analyze all data and develop action plans to define the priorities as it relates to existing business. Allocate resources to address concerns.
- Host employer roundtable with agendas designed to maximize dialogue leading to specific action items that provide long term value to participants. Consider breaking the events into CEO, plant manager and human resource professional sessions to provide maximum coordination and information flow.

- Create monthly confidential forum for key leadership of major employers to create information exchanges on topics such as workforce training, hurricane preparedness, COVID-19 recovery, tax changes, etc.

**PREPARE: PRODUCT**

- Utilize existing industry visits to understand and identify product to facilitate expansion and continued site investment.
- Develop a comprehensive product inventory and assessment related to current industry needs that can facilitate expansion opportunities.

**PREPARE: TALENT**

- Serve as an employee and talent liaison and advocate to develop training programs and address training concerns.
- Partner with the Florida Department of Veteran’s Affairs, local law enforcement and CareerSource to identify pockets of untapped talent in the community including veterans, displaced homemakers, formerly incarcerated and people with special needs. By focusing efforts on smaller segments of the population, tactics can be more specific, correspond more with the audience’s needs and more effectively remove barriers to entry while supporting existing industry and their changing employee needs.

**PURSUE: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

- Celebrate the importance of manufacturing to the region through an existing appreciation event annually. Release a scorecard at the event highlighting payroll, private investment and fiscal impact the employers contribute to the region.
- Establish an Existing Industry Committee of the board to focus on supporting the needs of existing companies in the targeted sectors within the county.

**PARTNER:**

- PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), CareerSource, Existing Industry, Department of Veteran’s Affairs, Local Law Enforcement, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Gulf Coast Minority Chamber of Commerce

## Goal 3: Innovation & Entrepreneurship »

*Facilitate programmatic solutions that support innovation and entrepreneurship utilizing existing spaces, programs, partners and initiatives.*

### RATIONALE //

The city and the county have benefited greatly with the efforts of the Studer Community Institute and other private investors creating an entrepreneurial culture for downtown. With that success several programs have been developed to support business formation from idea to start-up. While successful, there remains a disconnect to how a person with an idea can enter the system and utilize the resources available. **FloridaWest's role in fostering this ecosystem is threefold:**

- 1. Facilitate the continued ecosystem for business formation,**
- 2. Drive innovation to support target industries and**
- 3. Recruit talent through remote work**

### Entrepreneurship

Pensacola and Escambia County have an abundance of programs and resources to support the entrepreneur; however, stakeholder interviews revealed confusion on when and where someone would engage in the system.

**FloridaWest should champion the current entrepreneurship structure and articulate the value of a culture of business formation.** Government plays a tremendous role in start-up culture by providing clear pathways to obtaining permits, licenses and other regulatory requirements to do business there. The focus should be building a clear understanding of what is required and approval timeline when all documentation is provided. The biggest barrier to private capital is risk. Without clear pathways, the amount of risk to a startup is enhanced.

### Innovation

**FloridaWest can support its targeted industries of cybersecurity, aerospace & defense and advanced manufacturing through focused innovation initiatives.**

As mentioned earlier in the plan, federal procurement and increasing military readiness programs are central to success. This also provides an opportunity to encourage startup innovation to support not only the information technology and cybersecurity sectors but others as well. FloridaWest should proactively seek federal designations such as hub zones and opportunity zones to entice investment in this sector.

Another critical component of this strategy is engaging Florida's congressional delegation in seeking federal opportunities as it relates to supply chain and national security needs. With increased US Department of Defense and NATO funding, Escambia County is well positioned to take advantage of these efforts.

## APPROACHES //



### Innovation & Entrepreneurship Approaches Snapshot

PREPARE		
<b>Existing Assets &amp; Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expand the asset map of the entrepreneurial resources that demonstrate entry points and a timeline for use</li> </ul>	<b>Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Form a coalition to conduct an asset/product review as it relates to entrepreneurial endeavors and identify where opportunities and challenges exist</li> </ul>	<b>Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Explore a remote worker incentive program</li> </ul>
PURSUE		
<b>Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consider the development of a local innovation zone that would leverage community assets such as the redevelopment of the former Baptist Hospital campus</li> </ul>	<b>Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Update marketing tools to specifically target remote workers for skills needed to support its targets and existing industries</li> </ul>	
PARTNER		
PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), CareerSource, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Baptist Health, The Spring, Studer Community Institute, Small Business Development Center, Pensacola Young Professionals, Non-Profit Sector, Gulf Coast Minority Chamber of Commerce		

#### PREPARE: EXISTING ASSETS & RESOURCES

- Expand the asset map of the entrepreneurial resources that demonstrate entry points and a timeline for use. Each partner within the ecosystem should utilize the same asset map as potential investors, entrepreneurs and existing small businesses may enter the system from a variety of points. [The Spring](#) has a strong asset map already in place but could be expanded to include links to partner websites. The map should also include the very early entry point when an idea is just forming – be it a small market driven business or innovative start-up.

#### PREPARE: PRODUCT

- Form a coalition to conduct an asset/product review as it relates to entrepreneurial endeavors and identify where opportunities and challenges exist. The group should meet at least twice a year with an action-based agenda and a timeline for deliverables.

#### PREPARE: TALENT

- Explore a remote worker incentive program. According to a recent report by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the three key county characteristics identified to incentivize remote workers to relocate include having a nearby metropolitan area close to the beach with high-speed internet, a cost of living lower than the national average and the need for population or labor force growth. Many remote workers that currently reside within Florida are located within counties that border either the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf

of Mexico and where more than 90 percent of the county has high speed internet coverage of at least 100 megabits per second.<sup>4</sup> **Best Practice:** [Remote Shoals](#)

#### **PURSUE:** INNOVATION

- To increase economic opportunity in certain areas of the county, consider the development of a local innovation zone that would leverage community assets such as the redevelopment of the former Baptist Hospital campus. The zone should provide increased economic opportunity for underrepresented populations and focus on increased educational opportunities and entrepreneurship outreach. **Best Practice:** Although a state program, consider [Maryland's RISE Zone Program](#).

#### **PURSUE:** MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- Update marketing tools to specifically target remote workers for skills needed to support its targets and existing industries. The COVID pandemic caused great disruption in the workforce and accelerated the trend of working from home. This has resulted in states like Florida benefiting from gains in migration of people and wealth where each remote worker is predicted to spend about \$31,850 annually towards various service industries and about \$15,990 in the durable and non-durable goods industries each year according to the DEO report. With an estimated 22.25 million residents as of April 1, Florida continues to see population increases equivalent to adding a city the size of Orlando each year, according to a recent state report.

#### **PARTNER**

- PEDC, University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Escambia County Schools (CTE), CareerSource, First Place Partners, Chamber of Commerce, State Legislative Delegation, Baptist Health, The Spring, Studer Community Institute, Small Business Development Center, Pensacola Young Professionals, Non-Profit Sector, Gulf Coast Minority Chamber of Commerce

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<sup>4</sup> [Economic & Fiscal Effects of Remote Workers in Florida](#)

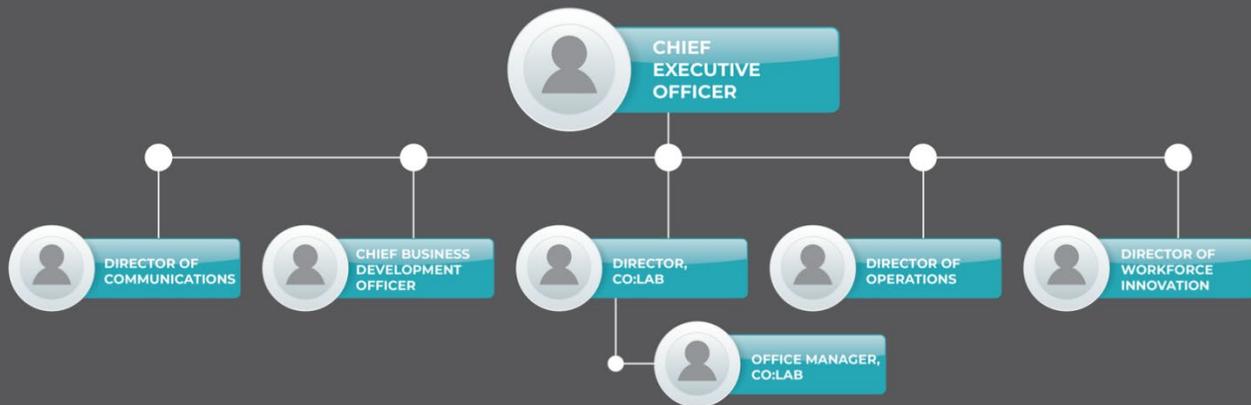
## CROSS-CUTTING: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Establishing the strategic vision of an economic development organization is a critical step to its success. Understanding the world of possibilities and the strategies and tactics that will be required to realize that vision is paramount in FloridaWest’s ability to achieve the long-term goals of the organization. But even the most forward-thinking strategic plan or vision is utterly dependent on the organizations ability to execute at a high level and for an extended period.

In defining the goals and approaches necessary to continue to move FloridaWest forward, it was important to review the organization’s capacity to implement and execute the plan. To establish greater efficiencies of output, VisionFirst reviewed the organizational structure, hierarchy and internal processes. **It is important to note that this assessment considers only the position and not the individuals of the organization.** The review only seeks to determine what steps could be taken to improve output and not make judgments based on individual talents or acumen.

### Current Organizational Structure »

FIGURE 6: CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



According to the 2014 articles of incorporation, FloridaWest is a 501(c)(6) not-profit whose central purpose is to promote industry and commerce, enhance the business climate and stimulate economic prosperity, support workforce development, promote community development and encourage political action.

The organization is governed by a board of directors with a combination of public and private funding and represents the economic interests of a county of more than 316,000 residents. Currently, FloridaWest has six full time employees responsible for fostering new business recruitment and existing industry retention along with workforce development and business formation. While on par with most economic development organizations in similar sized counties from a staffing standpoint, the current expectations of stakeholders place a premium on process efficiency.

## EXISTING POSITIONS

As discussed previously, the organization is currently expected to engage in a multitude of activities, either directly or indirectly associated with the mission of building, growing and sustaining the economic potential and prosperity of Northwest Florida.

The structure and operation have by all intents and purposes allowed the organization to excel in the completion of its mission objectives. The positions represent clearly defined roles and responsibilities capable of implementing the six overarching strategies established in the previous plan. This combined with a flat organizational structure promotes limited hierarchy/bureaucracy preventing potential operational challenges.

Even without significant changes to the structure, the organization would be able to continue to execute at an elevated level. But given recent departures along with the changing global landscape it is important to identify potential challenges and opportunities as it pertains to the FloridaWest structure.

## Operational Challenges »

### SILOED DIVISIONS

There are always a number of challenges that originate in how unique and specialized many economic development efforts can be from one division to the next. For example, the drivers that govern business recruitment activity do not always align with entrepreneurship efforts which can lead to a lack of communication between the divisions. This is exacerbated by remote working and multiple office locations. Conversely, one of the benefits of a traditionally flat organization is the sharing of information without hierarchical boundaries. Unfortunately, that advantage has not been realized to its fullest extent. **Foster an approach that uses weekly touch points to share approaches and brainstorm best practices across multiple platforms.**

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Currently, there is only one position responsible for new business recruitment and outreach. And while the existing industry outreach is shared among the team, a successful new business recruitment strategy cannot realize its full potential without being fundamentally intertwined with the local existing industry. Existing industry visits should be used to develop new business outreach and identify opportunities as well as challenges. One position responsible for these activities in a county the size of Escambia County is a challenge. That combined that with the demand to be “in market” to conduct successful lead generation leads to a capacity issue.

**Repurpose existing positions to address business development capacity challenges.**

### ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

As with any high performing organization, individuals tend to overcome obstacles to execution by increasing hours and output. While this is admirable, it is simply not sustainable. FloridaWest is in good company with this challenge. Rarely is there not some aspect to this in every economic development organization. But to move to where FloridaWest expects to be, steps must be taken to increase efficiency across the organization. From the CEO to the rest of the staff, there is no dedicated administrative function which means each position is responsible for increased efforts that take away from the focus of each position. **Add an administrative position that focuses on the entirety of the organization to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of every other position.**

#### OPERATIONAL REDUNDANCY

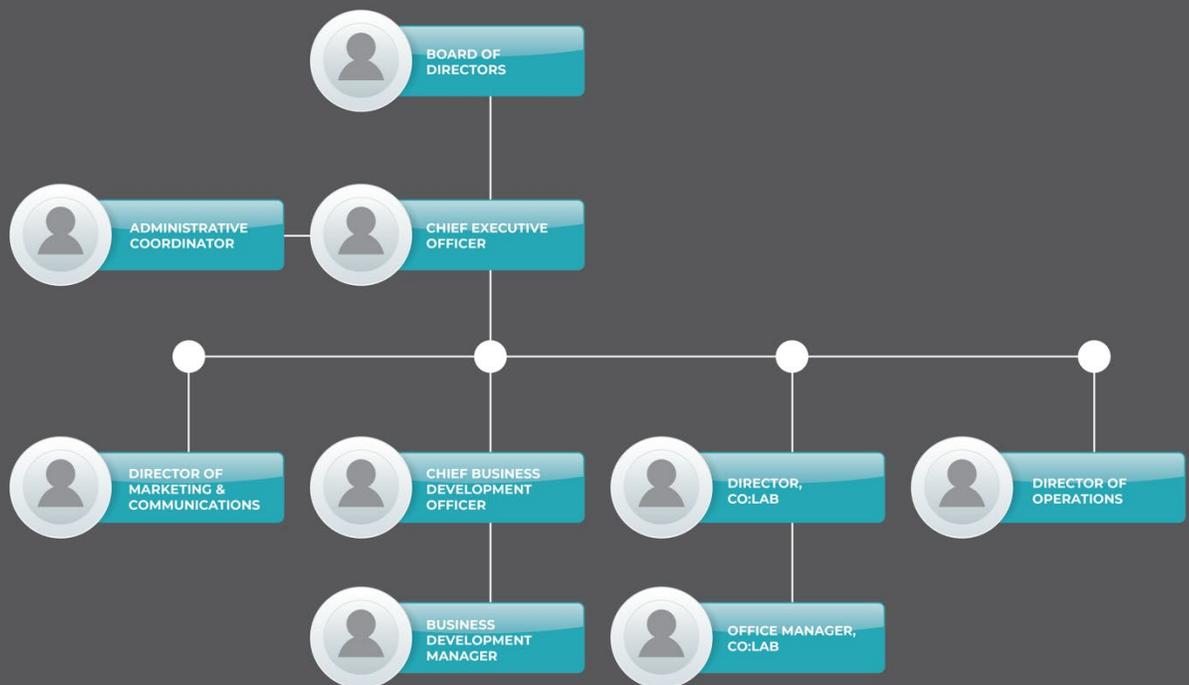
The adage “everything is economic development” is not only accurate, but it creates significant challenges for an organization like FloridaWest. When the mission speaks to fostering economic opportunities for Escambia County residents there is very little that would not fall into that category. But to be successful in its mission, distinctions must be made in what the organization will own and what it will facilitate. As mentioned in the goals, there are many stakeholders and partners in the region that must be utilized to provide extended capacity to the efforts outside of those that are owned specifically by the organization. As an example, workforce and talent are keys to almost every effort in successful economic development, but this cannot be an initiative Florida West owns as it requires direct partnership from workforce partners like CareerSource, Achieve Escambia along with the local school districts and technical centers for the region to be successful.

With local government partners, First Place Partners, Enterprise Florida and DEO, there is no shortage of stakeholders in the region and state. To take advantage of this FloridaWest must ensure their efforts are complimentary and not redundant. **Facilitate a retreat that develops a customer needs matrix for optimizing programs and initiatives while eliminating duplication of efforts.**

## Proposed Structure Changes »

To enhance the organization's effectiveness, a revised structure is outlined below. This structure change is designed to provide additional capacity to meet the growing needs of the organization by providing much needed administrative capabilities across the organization and additional business development capacity as it relates to new business recruitment, existing industry outreach and talent coordination.

**FIGURE 7: REVISED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**



## POSITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES //

While not all reflected on the organizational chart above, the following positions would represent shifts in responsibilities and/or new positions that would help achieve the goals of the board as well as key community stakeholders. To facilitate operational enhancement, the board also has a role, therefore onboarding as well as annual training/brainstorming should take place. Recommendations are included later in this section.

**Chief Executive Officer:** A critical component to success is the ability of an economic development organization to articulate a vision. It serves as the North Star for the economic development efforts performed by government leaders, investors, stakeholders and employees of FloridaWest. Key to this messaging is the CEO's ability to develop and maintain relationships with community leaders. These relationships are used to share the vision and why FloridaWest is relevant to obtaining that vision. Building these relationships with stakeholders both in and out of market require significant organizational changes to maximize outreach opportunities.

**Administrative Coordinator:** This position would provide administrative support to not only the CEO but the other members of the team as well. Having a dedicated position to assist with scheduling, planning, event coordination and travel would provide significant support to all team members. Additionally, the position would provide the CEO with additional connectivity to the team.

This would be a new position and would require additional funding and most likely board approval. However, there is ample justification for the creation of this position as it is a staple in most similar sized organizations and there was virtually unanimous feedback from the team as to its need.

This position is different than the operations manager whose functions go beyond an executive assistance managing budgets, board meetings, real estate functions, accounting and project management.

**Business Development Manager:** This position would assist the Chief Business Development Officer with business recruitment, retention and expansion activities. The position would assist in lead generation, project management, existing industry outreach and talent coordination. Additional capacity in business development would allow the organization to set significant metrics in terms of lead generation and project activity.

It is suggested that this position would replace the unfilled workforce innovation position as there would be no additional funding required. However, the facilitation role in terms of talent and workforce development would remain a critical role.

**Marketing & Communications Director:** Previously the organization had a director of communications focusing on traditional public relations and outreach. However, in an economic development organization it is critical for messaging be targeted to both internal and in-market stakeholders as well as external, out-of-market potential customers. In filling this position, FloridaWest should consider repurposing the position as a marketing and communications director seeking a person with advertising, marketing and digital media experience as well as traditional communications and public relations skills such as traditional media management, press release writing and dissemination, talking point development and event management.

**Deputy Director:** As discussed, a flat organization has its advantages in terms of direct reporting and lack of hierarchical hurdles. But given the current competitive landscape, it can

also pose certain challenges for the CEO. Current expectations revealed from stakeholder interviews show a considerable desire for the CEO position to take a much more proactive and aggressive path in terms of external communication and outreach. Given the current involvement required in the management of the team, this demand could prove challenging.

If the CEO is to prioritize these external activities over internal management, then some level of middle management must be considered. A position that serves either formally or informally as a “lieutenant or deputy director” would provide management, coaching and oversight to the staff as a whole, freeing up the CEO to focus on outward facing engagements and not be bogged down in the day-to-day activities of the organization. Ultimately, the position would report directly to the CEO with oversight over the other team members. The challenge is to determine whether an existing position can be repurposed into this role, or if a new position is to be created.

This leadership position can be created by elevating any existing position or creating a new role entirely. As the leadership explores these options there are multiple actions that can be taken. The key for future success of the organization is a well-defined hierarchical structure that promotes a culture of performance and teamwork.

**Many of these proposed changes will require additional budgetary considerations.** In today’s environment that is always a challenge. But in the quest for continuous improvement, it is important for the FloridaWest leadership team to consider some version of these proposed changes. The good news is FloridaWest has a strong organizational structure that can be adapted and repurposed to accomplish its goals. However, with just a few small adjustments the organization can become a leader in the economic development landscape moving forward.

## BOARD ENGAGEMENT //

An effective board is an informed and engaged board. Board members should be the organization’s biggest cheerleaders as advocates and ambassadors for the organization. The program of work should include annual and quarterly training sessions for both new and existing board members and can also be expanded to other community leaders. The orientation should include the mission and history of the organization and a description of board member duties and expectations, as well as a list of the names and bios of the staff and board.

Components of the orientation should include, but not limited to, the following components:

• Ethics policy	• Overall value proposition of past projects
• Role of the board & staff	• Product overview
• Financial overview	• Confidentiality

Additionally, each board member, whether new or existing, should sign a board member agreement and confidentiality agreement. They should also review and complete the conflict-

of-interest policy and questionnaire. Board members should receive financial reports and audited financials as well as the organization's bylaws.

Just as important as a clear onboarding and orientation process is how to engage board members at each meeting. Too often board meetings become formulaic in nature and are based on reporting. While there should always be an education component of these meetings, engagement is key. Developing concise agendas with select outcomes and deliberate conversations in mind can be invaluable to FloridaWest moving forward.

Meaningful engagement results in a board that can not only provide input regarding today's opportunities and challenges but is also visionary in reaching future objectives all while aligning resources to meet such goals.

- Create an internal objectives scorecard showing progress in reaching strategic initiatives on the agenda to be reviewed and discussed at every meeting.
- After the business agenda, allow time for brief "visioning" discussions to capture ideas to help support the organization and advance efforts in the region.
- Provide board members speaking points on key issues and opportunities (cleared for public release) so that each may act as surrogates in spreading FloridaWest's message and accurately answer questions.
- Host an annual strategic retreat to develop action items in coordination with the recommendations of the strategic plan. Each board member should lead the discussion of a specific topic assisted by a staff member to facilitate conversations and ideas.

## METRICS

While the achievements of FloridaWest team may be recognized by those engaged in the organization's efforts, there is often much more that has taken place than what is included in project announcements or board meetings.

The economic development world is growing more competitive by the day and the factors that determine the location and growth of a business are often beyond the control of one economic development organization. From logistics to infrastructure, there is no one factor that will determine a location. Often communities do everything in their power to reach a positive location decision only to miss the opportunity based on something outside their control. From location bias to market factors, a project can be lost for any number of reasons.

With that in mind, FloridaWest should not just be measured on the announcement of new jobs and capital investment as it does not take into consideration other factors as noted in the approaches above – the preparation and the pursuit of making the community more competitive in targeted industry sectors and overall business-friendly.

In considering the approaches offered within each of the strategic goals, a series of metrics are suggested on the following pages. **While numbers are provided, a baseline should be established between staff and the board to ensure measurement is meaningful and accurate.** The staff and board should consider a working group meeting to determine which metrics are most important and how to best present progress on a quarterly basis using a dashboard or report card format.

When considering the approaches and associated metrics consider if the staff of FloridaWest implement, facilitate or advocate to achieve measurable success.

- **Implement:** FloridaWest to undertake, coordinate and implement directly.
- **Facilitate:** FloridaWest to work in conjunction with partners to develop and implement.
- **Advocate:** FloridaWest to advocate to city, county, regional and state leaders to undertake and/or implement.

Breaking down the metrics further by assessing if they are:

- **Engagement-based:** Engagement-based metrics measure the degree of commitment and the level of interaction with key stakeholders to achieve outcome-based metrics.
- **Process-based:** Process-metrics are the specific steps in a process that lead — either positively or negatively — to a particular outcome-based metric.
- **Outcome-based:** Outcome-based metrics provide a way of measuring effectiveness and determining success from the point of view of businesses, investors and stakeholders.

It is important to understand all the activities that are undertaken to compete to measure performance. Many factors will be essential to the success of the organization, and as such the following measurements have been outlined, but the numbers for each should be developed with the staff and board in collaboration.

In developing specific targets, the percentage metrics should align with realistic measures. The goal is to evaluate these elements along with the creation of jobs and investment to paint a clear picture of how well the organization is representing Escambia County.

## BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

### Information Technology & Cybersecurity

- Share implementation highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Develop and share sector highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

### PREPARE

- Annually visit with 10 existing companies in the sector *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase number of new procurement opportunities generated for cybersecurity businesses by one per year
- Increase number of federal contract awards for local companies by two per year *(Advocate, Engagement-Based)*
- Increase participation of companies that participate in roundtable activities with a goal of 90% attendance (Companies represented at roundtable events divided by total number of companies in the sector identified by FloridaWest.) *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Development of a feasibility plan for additional office space at Cory Station *(Implement, Process-Based)*
- Develop plan for existing companies to access to SCIF space *(Advocate, Engagement-Based)*
- Increase total amount of square feet of occupied space in the sector by 10% over five years *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*
- Generate 50 new contacts annually through attendance at trade shows, events, etc. to create awareness *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

### PURSUE

- Announce 10 new companies/jobs in information technology in five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase number of apprenticeships underway by 3% annually *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase number of credentials awarded for sector by 3% annually *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase percentage of tenants in Co:Lab in cybersecurity industry to 10% of total tenants *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

### INNOVATION

- Increase number of students enrolled in UWF and PSC programs that support information technology and cybersecurity by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase number of graduates of these programs are employed locally by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Retain 20% of existing military personnel exiting military in county/region *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## MARKETING

- Implement one digital and social marketing campaign for the sector with measurable results including follow up with five contacts from the campaign *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Increase percentage of total prospects in this sector to 25% at each stage of selection process *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Targeted outreach to remote workers to support sector *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## RESULTS/LOCATIONS

*(Establish baseline from which to measure increase)*

- Increase net new jobs in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase total payroll in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase capital investment in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## COLLABORATION (PARTNERS)

- Highlight two new partnerships annually *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## Aerospace, Aviation & Defense

- Share implementation highlights at least once per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Develop and share sector highlights at least once per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## PREPARE

- Annually visit with 10 existing companies in the sector *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the inventory of ready sites available for this sector including parcels of 50 acres or less, 51-100, 100+ acres *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*

## PURSUE

- Announce 10 new or expanding companies in aerospace, aviation and defense over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the number of apprenticeships underway by 5% annually *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the number of credentials awarded in sector by 5% annually *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## INNOVATION

- Increase the number of students enrolled in UWF, PSC and K-12 programs that support sector by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the number of graduates of these programs are employed locally by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Retain 20% of existing military personnel that stay in county/region *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## MARKETING

- Implement one digital and social marketing campaign for the sector with measurable results including follow up with five contacts from the campaign. *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Increase percentage of total prospects in this sector to 25% at each stage of selection process *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## RESULTS/LOCATIONS

*(Establish baseline from which to measure increase)*

- Increase net new jobs in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase total payroll in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase capital investment in the sector by 10 percent over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## COLLABORATION (PARTNERS)

- Highlight two new partnerships annually *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## Manufacturing & Chemical

- Share implementation highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Develop and share sector highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## PREPARE

- Annually visit with five existing companies in the sector *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Progress of formalized terms for purchase agreements at The Bluffs *(Implement, Process-Based)*
- *Create pro forma examples of heavy process water users and the value to different industry types.* Create phases and budget for full development of The Bluffs *(Implement, Process-Based)*
- Percentage of completion of The Bluffs based on phases *(Implement, Process-Based)*
- Increase the number of ready sites available for this sector by 10% including parcels of 50 acres or less, 51-100, 100+ acres *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*

## PURSUE

- Announce five new or expanding companies of companies/jobs in manufacturing and chemical *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the number of companies/jobs in manufacturing and chemical by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase in the number of companies in sector *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Year over year increases/decreases in numbers of jobs and wages *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Number of apprenticeships underway *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Credentials awarded for sector *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## INNOVATION

- Increase the number of students enrolled in UWF, PSC, K-12 programs that support sector by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the number of graduates of these programs are employed locally by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Retain 10% of existing military personnel that stay in county/region to support the sector *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## MARKETING

- Identification and targeting of fifty companies that are heavy process water users for specific ongoing marketing *(Implement, Process-Based)*
- Implement one digital and social marketing campaign for the sector with measurable results including follow up with five contacts from the campaign. *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Increase percentage of total prospects in this sector to 25% at each stage of selection process *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## RESULTS/LOCATIONS

*(Establish baseline from which to measure increase)*

- Increase net new jobs in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase total payroll in the sector by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase capital investment in the sector by 10 percent over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## COLLABORATION (PARTNERS)

- Highlight two new partnerships annually *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

- Share implementation highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Develop and share sector highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## PREPARE

- Sixty visits per year with existing companies including those in targeted sectors
- Develop three to five key trends identified by visits *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## PURSUE

- Increase the number of companies, jobs, payroll by 10% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Announce five new expansions with increased jobs, wages and capital investment over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## INNOVATION

- Increase the number of students enrolled in UWF, PSC, K-12 programs that support sector by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

- Increase the number of graduates of these programs are employed locally by 10% over five years *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Retain 10% of existing military personnel that stay in county/region to support the sector *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## **MARKETING**

- Implement one digital and social marketing campaign for sector with measurable results including follow up with five contacts from the campaign. *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Increase the number of expansion/retention projects by 20% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Market to specific talent for relocation to area for open positions *(Facilitate, Engagement-Based)*

## **RESULTS/LOCATIONS**

*(Establish baseline from which to measure increase)*

- Increase by 10% the number of net new jobs from exiting industry *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase new payroll by 10% *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase overall private capital investment by existing industries by 25% over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## **COLLABORATION (PARTNERS)**

- Highlight two new partnerships annually *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

## **INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

- Share implementation highlights at least one per quarter *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*
- Progress reports of fostering the entrepreneurial ecosystem twice a year *(Facilitate, Engagement-Based)*

## **PREPARE**

- Prepare asset map and measure number of participants utilizing each asset within 18 months *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*
- Map progress of startups moving through the lattice work of programs within 18 months *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*

## **PURSUE**

- Increase the number of individuals completing entrepreneurial training programs 10% annually *(Facilitate, Outcome-Based)*

## **INNOVATION**

- Identify three potential innovation opportunities with existing businesses and business recruitment targets annually *(Facilitate, Outcome-Based)*

## **MARKETING**

- Implement one digital and social marketing campaign for sector with measurable results including 10 entrepreneurs to relocate to county annually *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*
- Number of expansion/retention projects *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*

## **RESULTS/LOCATIONS**

- Increase the number of businesses startups after training by 25% annually *(Facilitate, Process-Based)*
- Overall increase in tenants in Co:Lab by industry sector/targeted industry sector annually each year over five years *(Implement, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase the number of new business startups by 10% annually *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*
- Increase of the number of business licenses issued annually *(Advocate, Outcome-Based)*

## **COLLABORATION (PARTNERS)**

- Highlight two new partnerships annually *(Implement, Engagement-Based)*

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**THANK YOU**

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