

OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

THREE-YEAR SIX PILLARS™ STRATEGIC PLAN



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PREFACE

The Florida Chamber Foundation's vision is one of Florida encompassing vibrant communities, global competitiveness and high-wage jobs. The Foundation created a framework to accomplish that vision known as the Six Pillars™. The product of years of collaboration and research by the Florida Chamber Foundation, the Six Pillars™ identifies the critical factors determining Florida's future:¹

1. Talent Supply & Education
2. Innovation & Economic Development
3. Infrastructure & Growth Leadership
4. Business Climate & Competitiveness
5. Civic & Governance Systems
6. Quality of Life & Quality Places

The Six Pillars™ concept incorporates the work of a diverse range of stakeholders. The framework serves as an organizing force for strategic planning at local, regional and state levels. Its real power is in the efficiency of harnessing fragmented viewpoints into a common and consistent conversation. The Florida Chamber Foundation, along with its Six Pillars Caucus System™, released their first iteration of their Six Pillars 20-year Strategic Plan in 2011.

INTRODUCTION

Facilitated by the Destin Chamber of Commerce, long-time supporters and advocates for the Six Pillars™ process, the four chambers of commerce for Okaloosa County, Florida and the Economic Development Council for Okaloosa County joined in an unprecedented partnership to create the first ever county-wide strategic plan to diversify, grow and sustain the economy of Okaloosa County.

The Okaloosa Six Pillars™ team held their community kick-off event on August 28, 2012 at the Mattie Kelley Arts Center on the campus of Northwest Florida State College in Niceville, Florida. Dr. Dale Brill of the Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation executed the commencement event with approximately 100 county-wide participants.

To further enhance the community information sharing process and buy-in process the Economic Development Council, supported by the four chambers of commerce, hosted a Roundtable Symposium on February 27, 2013 at the Ramada Beach Resort on Okaloosa Island. Approximately 300 community and business leaders filled the conference as Mrs. Bentina Terry, Chair of the Florida Foundation shared her expertise on the subject and how it can benefit the community long-term.

The Okaloosa Six Pillars™ team partnered with Collaborative Labs at St. Petersburg College for a strategic planning day on March 21, 2013. Collaborative Labs facilitated the eight-hour process with over 100 key public and private community partners. Within a week following the planning session, Collaborative Labs submitted their first iteration of the strategic plan for final finessing by the Okaloosa Six Pillars™ team.

The pages that follow provide that plan as it stands today. Of important note is that strategic planning is a continuous process; it is not an end product. An open, participative, well-publicized planning process is necessary to establish and maintain this tool.

THE PLAN

TALENT SUPPLY & EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE

Increase education and job opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, and medical (STEAMM).

STRATEGIES:

Increase educational and job opportunities in STEAMM through collaboration with local Workforce Development, university and college systems, and local K-12 education systems.

Determine the technical skills and training needed by employers in these job areas to better prepare our students for future careers in these critical areas and align instruction to these skills and local workforce development needs.

Provide summer externships to teachers to help them build awareness and better understand the needs and role of the local workforce and schools in building qualified employees.

Create Job Shadowing opportunities for high school students with local businesses through the Gifted Externship and the district Internship courses.

Provide mentoring experiences through Workforce 20/20 for low income citizens.

Promote Women in Engineering programs for job shadowing experiences for local high school students.

OBJECTIVE

Increase student and teacher access to technology needed to promote STEAMM careers and career technical education (CTE) linking jobs with education.

STRATEGIES:

Position statement letters should be written by local businesses and Chambers to our local delegation encouraging both state and federal legislatures to assist with funding for K-12 educational technology needs in hardware, software, training and infrastructure.

The Florida Association of District School Superintendents, the Florida Association of School Administrators, Florida League of Counties and Cities, Florida Chambers of Commerce, Florida's Great Northwest, Economic Development Council, Workforce Development Boards, etc. should request this be included in their legislative platforms for the coming year and make this a priority in future years until pupil/computer ratio is 7:1 and other infrastructure needs are a reality.

OBJECTIVE

Meet the labor force talent needs of our local business and industry partners.

STRATEGIES:

Identify and assess industry/business needs and local high wage sustainable employment opportunities through the HAAS Center, Workforce Development and Economic Development Council.

Develop an interview tool with the help of targeted industries to assist local students, military spouses, and adult job seekers to understand the application and interview process for STEAMM jobs.

OBJECTIVE

Develop cooperative programs with industry and higher education partners.

STRATEGIES:

Determine the demographics of job seekers in our local area and create cooperative programs with education and industry partners by targeting students, military spouses, youth and retired (but still working) adults to get involved in these programs.

Communicate with these groups the mentor and internship programs and educational opportunities available in local STEAMM career fields.

Provide skill inventories, training, site visits, guest speakers, mentorships and mock interviews to this population through local Chambers and STEAMM business partners, medical institutes, and defense contractors, etc.

INNOVATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE

Develop a more attractive business climate in Okaloosa County through the use of business incentives, streamlined approval processes, and an effective quality of life campaign.

STRATEGIES:

Identify target industries.

Determine needs and requirements of the businesses we want to attract.

Identify what business climate changes are needed.

Identify the obstacles in all approval processes that we have to overcome.

Develop an effective marketing campaign spotlighting Okaloosa County as a great place to work and live.

Identify what is working and what needs work in the approval process.

Identify some best practices that are working for similarly-sized counties with similar demographics to Okaloosa County.

Ensure the marketing campaign referenced above also targets tourists that visit Okaloosa County.

OBJECTIVE

Educated and skilled STEAMM workforce resulting from collaboration with vocational training and higher education for broad-based educational attainment resulting in Okaloosa County being an R&D tech-center. Technology transfer nexus thereby “slingshotting” our economic diversification into greater proportions.

STRATEGIES:

Perform a needs assessment for STEMM businesses to determine best locations, workforce requirements, marketing and financing needs.

Promote the development of targeted skills and educational curriculum.

Extend Florida Lambda Rail ultra-high bandwidth infrastructure to Bob Sikes Airport (Crestview) and Sacred Heart Hospital (Destin).

OBJECTIVE

Develop and RETAIN talented workforce/jobs per salary range; Keep high school grads in the county

STRATEGIES:

Develop an occupation list for the targeted industries identified above.

Develop an internship and mentoring program that pairs educational institutions with local businesses and professional organizations.

Promote early exposure to career opportunities in the school system (5th grade or younger) through the utilization of career champions/ambassadors, video presentations, field trips etc.

Student created video contest to portray local career opportunities with scholarship rewards from various industries/companies.

Develop Youth TecMen Group.

Develop a method for tracking the tenure of employees to determine retention rates in Okaloosa County.

INFRASTRUCTURE & GROWTH LEADERSHIP

OBJECTIVE

Promote and enhance transportation infrastructure to reduce congestion and commute times through the integrated use of a multi-modal transportation network.

STRATEGIES:

Coordinate and Synchronize Long Range Multi-Modal (Air, Sea, Land-Rail, Vehicular Roadways, Transit and Pedestrian) Transportation Planning.

Map existing multimodal facilities, identify and prioritize local and regional future needs.

Identify and secure funding

OBJECTIVE

Ensure Okaloosa County's Supply of Available and Sustainable Clean Water by Planning in Accordance with Projected Growth Patterns (Storm water, Drinking Water, Wastewater, Surface Water, Coastal Management).

STRATEGIES:

Promote the re-use of reclaimed water throughout the County.

Evaluate current Storm water requirements, permitting, and improve as necessary.

Work to Improve Public Education on all Water-related subjects such as Water Conservation, Safe Drinking Water, and the effects of septic systems and advantages of centralized sewer systems.

Ensure a Comprehensive Beach Restoration Plan is developed and implemented.

OBJECTIVE

Ensure Okaloosa County's supply of reliable and reasonably priced energy.

STRATEGIES:

Ensure that the long-term energy needs within Okaloosa County are identified and are attainable.

Explore feasible alternative and renewable sources of energy within Okaloosa County.

Explore system reliability standards and how energy providers are improving system efficiencies.

BUSINESS CLIMATE & COMPETITIVENESS

OBJECTIVE

Develop a Mentoring Program that promotes a partnership between the local military leadership and local business leaders to establish a culture of integrity, customer service, respect, and responsibility designed to retain local younger talent and attract workforces and corporations from outside our market.

STRATEGIES:

Form a blue ribbon committee of Industry leadership.

Establish a strategic vision and outline of program.

Explore a competition element utilizing sponsors and representatives from participating schools.

Establish rules for the game. Model existing structure if available.

Identify 2 to 3 key and core areas of STEAMM (with examples of activities) to focus on first....then look to expand

Collaborate with Boys and Girls Clubs; Scouts; other non-profits; school system

OBJECTIVE

Streamline a county-wide permitting system so development has business friendly timelines and costs with 45 day benchmark.

STRATEGIES:

Establish a taskforce or committee consisting of city & county stakeholders to audit existing business and development permit approval process.

Promote the establishment of a single point of contact and resource center for gathering information and submitting paperwork for all cities/townships within Okaloosa County.

Leverage Technology to one intranet system.

OBJECTIVE

Business Sustainability - Leveraging Natural Resources to Increase Business Growth by reducing costs of Energy by 20% (Harness Solar Energy, Preserve Water)

STRATEGIES:

Encourage utility providers to promote the use of energy efficient devices and provide discounts or incentives.

Encourage incentives for residential green energy and resource conservation improvements. (County & City utilities)

Market Okaloosa county assets to new business interests and incentivize green initiatives. (EDC & Chambers)

OBJECTIVE

Promote STEAMM - science, tech, engineering, arts, math, medicine – with a goal of 50% increase in job growth in these categories through effective preparation and education in order to develop a pool of talent designed to attract target industries to Okaloosa County.

STRATEGIES:

Appoint blue ribbon committee and select industry leaders to champion their sector. Include investigation of what exists in our market now. Also study other states where this has worked well.

Collaborate with taxing authorities throughout Okaloosa County to develop a comprehensive plan designed to offer attractive tax incentives to entice business in the targeted industries to establish a presence in Okaloosa County.

Establish or solidify "externship" programs and partnerships within these sectors.

CIVIC & GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

VISION

Improved local governance and increased civic participation in local government is critical to better service delivery and greater responsiveness to Okaloosa County priority issues. To improve local governance and civic systems, local governments with ample authority and resources should empower local communities through mechanisms that promote the following ideals:

- Increased citizen access to information
- Inclusion and participation of the citizenry
- Increased accountability of governments to the citizenry
- Investment in local organizational capacity

OBJECTIVE

Encourage and further economic development within Okaloosa County through the promotion of business friendly regulations, strategic infrastructure investments, targeted marketing strategies and incentives.

STRATEGIES:

Coordinate and promote the responsible use of resources--% Recycling, % Water Use, Water levels.

Coordinate efforts to identify, discuss and address emerging issues that affect all of Okaloosa County.

OBJECTIVE

Improve the integrity of public and community service by promoting higher ethical standards of conduct for public officials along with an emphasis on transparency and accountability in local government.

STRATEGIES:

Promote ideals such as integrity, fiscal responsibility, balanced budgets, clean audits, low taxes and openness.

Implement policies and standards that ensure that Okaloosa County becomes a national leader in ethical governance.

Encourage collaboration amongst all governing bodies and agencies within Okaloosa County.

Encourage collaboration between all government officials and community leaders within Okaloosa County.

Evaluate the constitutional officer structure across all governing bodies in Okaloosa County and identify where efficiencies can be obtained.

OBJECTIVE

Increase civic awareness and participation through the encouragement of voter participation and election turnout.

STRATEGIES:

Encourage public service and evaluate the need for election reforms.

Utilize innovative means to improve civic participation.

Implement strategies designed to increase voter participation and election turnout.

OBJECTIVE

Utilize information technology where feasible to improve services, promote efficiencies and eliminate redundancies.

STRATEGIES:

Streamline the permitting process across Okaloosa County.

Identify where information technology could be utilized to achieve the above objective.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND QUALITY PLACES

OBJECTIVE

Ensure a Vibrant Culture exists within Okaloosa County with access to Educational and Recreational Activities for all ages.

STRATEGIES:

Present signature national events at venues such as the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation.

Promote the establishment of new state-of-the-art museum for the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida as well as other museums in Okaloosa County.

Establish a School of the Performing Arts in Okaloosa County.

OBJECTIVE

Ensure all Okaloosa County residents have access to high quality healthcare systems and primary care/specialty physicians.

STRATEGIES:

Collaborate with the medical community in Okaloosa County to develop and publish community health report cards.

Encourage the development of quality senior living communities to care for aging population.

Enhance physician recruitment efforts

Engage the medical community to promote affordable healthcare in Okaloosa County.

OBJECTIVE

Ensure clean, safe, attractive, family-oriented environments through effective recycling and crime prevention programs.

STRATEGIES:

Collaborate with the local Chambers of Commerce to promote increased recycling efforts County-wide.

Promote crime prevention and civic participation

OBJECTIVE

Promote engaged and compassionate communities across Okaloosa County.

STRATEGIES:

Collaborate with United Way to advocate volunteering in community.

Promote the establishment of a Faith-based cooperative to champion community outreach.

Promote the growth of Emerald Coast Young Marines and similar programs designed to educate young people through community service initiatives.

Build on Annual Week of Blessings and make it more inclusive of the greater Okaloosa County.

Okaloosa Six Pillars™ Execution Team

