



Meeting Summary

Education, Workforce, and Economic Development Task Force, Kick-off Meeting
September 24, 2008
Sebring Civic Center

Summary

The initial meeting of the Heartland Education, Workforce, and Economic Development (EWED) convened September 24th in Sebring, FL. This group is the second of four issue area Task Forces to begin work on visioning for the Heartland 2060 process. The Task Forces will be led by co-chairs and will identify issues, develop goals and objectives, and recommend implementation strategies. The co-chairs of this group have been identified as Mark Morton of Lykes Brothers and Glades EDC, and Jim Otterman, Director of Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI).

The meeting was convened by Pat Steed of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and included several presentations, followed by small group discussions. Mary Helen Blakeslee of the Governor's Office of Trade, Tourism and Economic Development, presented on "Economic Development and Long-Term Strategic Thinking." Jim Otterman also presented on the work of FHREDI.

Core Factors and Key Issues Moving Forward

Previously, the Leadership Team identified the primary core factors and key issues within the Heartland to inform the work of the EWED Task Force moving forward:

- **Economic Diversification**

- Business retention and attraction
- Opportunities for youth
- Meeting future industry skills needs
- Mix of employment opportunities

- **Infrastructure to Support A Diversified Economy**

- Community development
- Transportation
- Energy infrastructure
- Healthcare facilities

- **Early Learning, K-16, Lifelong Education**

- Linkages of quality of life, workforce, and education
- Opportunities to learn, stay, and work locally
- Attainability of continued education
- Develop pipeline for educational attainment

Breakout Group Discussions

After a description of the key issues the EWED TF will address, meeting participants broke into 4 small groups to discuss the following questions for each of the key factors. (1)What long term issues will affect the region? (2) What are the citizens most interested in? (3) What are Task Force members’ individual interests? The results of these small group discussions are presented below.

Economic Diversification

Long-Term Issues	Citizen Key Issues	TF Member Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve skills of workforce across all ages and industries • Expand infrastructure and development sites • Continue focus on business retention then attraction then expansion • Keep up and build on technological trends • Targeted educational and skills building programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep importance of old industries/employment while attracting new • Safe, clean, reliable industry • Retain community lifestyle and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand educational niche needs, fulfill those and communicate to employers • Improve data collection and information communication between employers and educators and economic developers • Interpret and leverage national, state, and regional trends

Infrastructure to Support A Diversified Economy

Long-Term Issues	Citizen Key Issues	TF Member Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus infrastructure development and to meet long-term growth and economic goals • Utilize existing rail capacity for freight and passenger traffic • Maintain drivable, congestion free corridors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility for all ages • Improve access to employment centers, health care facilities, recreational opportunities, cultural centers • Increasing costs of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyst site • Improve public transportation and walkable communities are “ready-to-go” • Create community infrastructure that encourages youth to return/remain

Early Learning, K-16, Lifelong Education

Long-Term Issues	Citizen Key Issues	TF Member Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent, sustainable funding with flexibility • Cultivate and retain local talent • Elevate perception and status of vocational education • View, promote, and establish a pipeline that encourages and allows for lifelong learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand education access (distance/virtual learning) • Direct and indirect costs of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase range of educational opportunities to diversify workforce skill sets • Immigration and bi-lingual workforce and educational needs/trends • Changing attitudes and expectations of retirees—integrate as support system