

SPACE
to live

POWER
to grow

FLORIDA RURAL
Economic Development Summit
November 17-19, 2026

AGENDA



WORLD
EQUESTRIAN CENTER®

World Equestrian Center
Ocala, FL



— Tentative Agenda —

Tuesday, November 17, 2026

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

FREDA Board Meeting (WEC Equestrian Manor)

1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Dirt to Development: Yates Construction

Speaker: **Scott Poag, CECD**, Director of Business Development, Yates Construction

3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

RAO Case Studies of Unique Initiatives

Speakers: **Sarah Evers**, President/CEO, The Development Group;
Shellie Phelps, Creative Consultant, Biggest Fish Consulting;
Opportunity Florida Representative

5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Welcome Reception (WEC Equestrian Manor)

Wednesday, November 18, 2026

7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

Networking Breakfast

8:15 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

Welcome: Announcements & Recognition of Rural Champion Sponsors

General Session: Essential Skills and Differentiated Skills in Rural Economic Development

Speaker: **Ted Abernathy**, Founder/CEO, Economic Leadership (North Carolina)

9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Update on Florida Commerce

Speaker: **J. Alex Kelly**, Secretary, Florida Department of Commerce

10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Cyber Security and the Critical Importance of Local Communities

Moderator: **Josh Burgin**, Founder & President, Alliance for Global Security

Panelists: FBI Cyber Security Officials, Department of National Intelligence Officials

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Awards Luncheon

Recognition of the RAO Volunteers of the Year

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Consultants Panel

Panelists: **Meghan DiGiacomo**, Senior Consultant, VisionFirst Advisors; **Chris Wimsatt**, Director Corporate Site Selection, Location Design Group

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Data Center Panel

3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Break

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Keynote Presentation: *Stay In The Deep End*

Speaker: **Daron K. Roberts**, Chief Dive Instructor, Deep End Ventures

5:00 p.m.

Adjourn

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

FPL Reception (Equestrian Hotel Terrace)

Thursday, November 19, 2026

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Networking Breakfast

— Tentative Agenda —

Thursday, November 19, 2026 (cont'd)

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Legislative Session

Moderator: **Denise Grimsley**, Senior Advisor, The Development Group

Panelists: **The Honorable Kaylee Tuck**, Florida House of Representatives (District 83); **Mike Grissom**, Principal, Government Relations, Buchanan; **The Honorable Chad Johnson**, Florida House Member, District 22

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Keynote Presentation

Speaker: **The Honorable Jeff Brandes**, Former Florida State Senator, Founder and President, Florida Policy Project

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Wrap Up and Prize Drawings