



Rural Florida:  
**CLOSER** THAN YOU THINK

November 20–22

# 2024 Florida Rural Economic Development Summit

World Equestrian Center | Ocala, FL



Summit  
**AGENDA**

# — Current Agenda —

## Tuesday, November 19, 2024

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

### FREDA Board Meeting

## Wednesday, November 20, 2024

1:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

### Summit Registration and Check-in

#### RURAL ISSUES WORKING GROUP SESSIONS:

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

#### A Discussion About Key Elements of Small Community Downtown Revitalization and Rural Tourism

Speakers: **Lacy Beasley**, President, Retail Strategies; **Jenn Gregory**, President for Downtown Strategies, Retail Strategies

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

#### Break

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

#### Targeted and Unique Economic Development Opportunities for Rural Florida

Speakers: **Steven Birnholz**, President of Council of 100 Foundation and EVP for Research; **Matt Chesnut**, Vice President for Business Development and Economic Development, Space Florida

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

### Welcome Reception Dinner On Your Own

## Thursday, November 21, 2024

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

### Registration and Networking Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.

### Welcome & General Session Keynote Address

Welcome: **Darryl Register**, Chairman, FREDA

Keynote Address: WEC Story and Economic Impact

Speakers: **Justin Garner**, Sr. Director for Operations, Hospitality and Marketing, WEC; **Rob Bowman**, President, R+L Global Logistics

Moderator: **Kevin Sheilley**, President/CEO, OcalaCEP

9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

### The Vision for Rural Economic Development in Florida

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

10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

### Break (Networking in Exhibit Booth area)

10:45a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

### Our Experience with Doing Business in Rural Florida: A Perspective from Private Company Executives

Speakers: **Kyle Hudson**, Operations Manager, Probes Unlimited, Inc., Bonifay, Florida; **Tom Hoversen**, President, Comarco Products, Palatka, Florida; **Christen Johnson**, Vice President and Administrator, AdventHealth Wauchula

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

### Legislative Awards Luncheon

# — Current Agenda —

1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

## Workforce and Talent Development Initiatives in Rural Florida

Speakers: **Jodi Tillman**, Director, Big Bend Technical College, Perry, Florida; **Tammy Dasher**, Director, NextStep at Endeavor Academy, Marianna, Florida; **Fred Hawkins**, President, South Florida State College

Moderator: **Richard Williams**, Executive Director, Opportunity Florida & CareerSource Chipola

2:15 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

## Funding Projects and Capital Stacking

Speakers: **Mark Kruse**, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, First Capital Finance/Florida First Capital; **Greg Vaday**, Economic Development Representative, US Department of Commerce, EDA; **Mason Alford**, Director, Office of Small Business Innovation, Florida Department of Commerce

Moderator: **Keitha Daniels**, Director, Hendry County Economic Development Council

3:00 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

## Break (Networking in Exhibit Booth area)

3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

## Five Ways to Kill a Deal (and tips for competing!)

Speakers: **Richard Blackwell**, VP of Development, Southeast Region, Agracel; **Cathy Chambers**, Senior Economic Development Director, FPL

Moderator: **Scarlett Phaneuf**, Economic Development Representative, PowerSouth Energy

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

## Rural Summit Reception: FPL Sponsored

## Friday, November 22, 2024

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

## Networking Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.

## A Review of the 2024 National and Florida Elections: Impacts and Opportunities for 2025

Speakers: **Michael Grissom**, Principal, Government Relations Buchanan, Tallahassee, Florida; **Anthony Bedell**, Senior Corporate and Government Relations Director, Becker, Washington, D.C.; **Sadie Haire**, Government Relations Consultant, Becker & Poliakoff

Moderator: **Denise Grimsley**, CEO, The Development Group

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

## Florida and Rural Florida's Economy

Speakers: **Dr. Jerry Parrish**, Chief Economist, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; **Ben Friedman**, Researcher, Economic Development Data and Analytics, Duke Energy

Moderator: **Rose Fagler**, Weyerhaeuser

10:15 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

## Keynote Address: A Very Big Fish — A small town's journey to becoming who they always were!

Speaker: **Shellie Phelps**, Executive Director, Wetumpka AL Chamber of Commerce

11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

## Wrap-Up and Adjourn