

Florida Rural Economic Development Summit 2025



SUMMIT AGENDA



WORLD
EQUESTRIAN CENTER®

World Equestrian Center
Ocala, FL

2025 NOVEMBER
19-21

— Tentative Agenda —

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Summit Registration and Check-in

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

FREDA Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

12:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Summit Registration and Check-in

2:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Break (Networking in Exhibit Booth area)

1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Key Elements, Emerging Issues, and Best Practices in Rural and Community Development

Speakers:

Gray Swoope, President & CEO, VisionFirst Advisors

Nancy Blum-Heintz, Managing Director, VisionFirst Advisors

Shellie Phelps, Creative Consultant, Biggest Fish Consulting

Jennifer Conoley, President & CEO, Florida's Great Northwest

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

Welcome Reception

RAO Volunteer of the Year Awards

Dinner on Your Own

Thursday, November 20, 2025

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

Summit Registration Desk Open

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

Registration & Networking Breakfast

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

Welcome & FREDA Overview

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

Recognition of Rural Champion Sponsors

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

Keynote Address: The Rising Storm - How the Demographic Drought's Damage Will Look Like a Hurricane

Ron Hetrick, Principal Economist, Lightcast

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

Break (Networking in Exhibit Booth area)

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

Rural Florida: Update from the Secretary of Commerce

Speakers:

J. Alex Kelly, Secretary, Florida Department of Commerce

Matt Swanson, President, SelectFlorida

11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Lunch – Legislative Awards

1:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.

Site Consultants Panel

Speakers:

Gray Swoope, President & CEO, VisionFirst Advisors

Chris Wimsatt, Advisor, Corporate Real Estate, Energy, Economic Development, Location Design Group

Chris Lloyd, Senior Vice President and Director, McGuireWoods Consulting

Moderators:

Cathy Chambers, Senior Director, Economic Development, Florida Power & Light Company

Marc Hoenstine, CEcD, Managing Director, Economic Development, Duke Energy Florida

— Tentative Agenda —

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

RAO Case Studies of Projects

Speakers:

Florida Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity (FHRO):

Kaylee King, President, Okeechobee County Economic Development Corporation

Opportunity Florida:

Julie Dennis, Wakulla County Economic Development Coordinator

Beth Chichetti, CECD, MEDP, Wakulla County Economic Development Coordinator

North Florida Economic Development Partnership (NFEDP):

Mike McWaters, CEO, Suwannee Electric Cooperative

3:45 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Break (Networking in Exhibit Booth area)

4:15 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

2025 Legislative Review and 2026 Session Outlook

Speakers:

Mike Grissom, Principal, Buchanan

Sadie Haire, Government Relations Consultant, Becker

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

Rural Summit Reception: FPL Sponsored
(Equestrian Hotel Stirrups Terrace)

Friday, November 21, 2025

7:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Summit Registration Desk Open

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

Networking Breakfast

8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

AI and Its Future in Rural Florida

Speaker:

J. Scott Angle, Ph.D., Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources, UF/IFAS

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

Closing Keynote: Rural Strong

Darrick McGhee, Sr., President & CEO of Strategic Inflection Point, LLC.

10:30 a.m.

Wrap-up & Adjourn

Presented by the Florida Rural Economic Development Association

