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### How to prepare an economic development action plan for your community

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# How to Prepare an Economic Development Action Plan for Your Community

## Sample Responses for Cases 1 and 2

Prepared by

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## Guide to Case Study Responses.

Sample responses to the case study questions follow. There are no “right” answers to the questions. The case is designed to motivate critical thinking and innovation. The instructor is encouraged to allow students to present their own answers, either individually or using a group presentation format. Then the instructor can close this module by critiquing the students’ answers based on his/her own knowledge and experiences, as well as the sample responses included here.

### Rural County, Florida - Case Study 1 Sample Responses.

#### 1. Rural County, Florida’s leadership and stakeholders.

The leadership list of elected officials and other influential community leaders is arranged according to order in which we recommend that personal contacts be initiated. We recognize that scheduling conflicts or other availability issues may not allow following the order perfectly. However, the intent is to not alienate any community leader who may be sensitive to a “pecking order.” For example, a visit to Mr. Dickel at the Chamber of Commerce before visiting the mayor of Citrus Corners may be considered a breach of the “pecking order.” Assume that the community’s leaders frequently communicate with each other. Then the mayor may be upset if Mr. Dickel tells him about the new ED effort in Rural County while the mayor has not yet been informed of the effort.

Elected officials:

- a. Board of County Commissioners - ED professional should endeavor to maintain personal contact with individual members to build upon the initial support of the Board for ED initiatives. Personally invite each Board member’s continued participation in the planning process. At a minimum a monthly report of the community’s ED status should be sent to the members.
- b. Sheriff - ED professional should make an appointment with the sheriff to initiate personal contact and inform the sheriff of the forthcoming ED strategic planning process. Invite the sheriff to participate in the planning process. Seek the sheriff’s ideas about potential ED initiatives that may be of particular significance to law enforcement in general and the Sheriff’s Department in particular. At a minimum a monthly report of the community’s ED status should be sent to the sheriff.
- c. School Board Members- ED professional should request a spot on the agenda at the next public School Board meeting in order to introduce himself/herself to the Board and the members of the community who are attending the meeting. Subsequent to the public meeting, attempt to meet each Board member individually to solicit their participation in the strategic planning process. Seek out their opinions concerning potential ED initiatives particularly relevant to the K through 12 educational issues. At a minimum a

monthly report of the community's ED status should be sent to each School Board member.

d. Citrus Corners' Mayor - ED professional should make an appointment with the mayor to initiate personal contact and inform the mayor of the forthcoming ED strategic planning process. Seek the mayor's ideas about potential ED initiatives that may be of particular benefit to his city. Invite the mayor's participation in the planning process. With the mayor's concurrence, seek a place on the agenda at the next public City Council meeting. Subsequent to the public meeting, attempt to meet each Council member individually to solicit ideas on potential ED initiatives and their participation in the strategic planning process. At a minimum a monthly report of the community's ED status should be sent to the mayor and each City Council member.

Other influential community leaders:

e. County Administrator - The county administrator is probably the supervisor of the ED professional. Frequent and close discussions with the county administrator are essential for the success of the county's economic development action plan. The county administrator should be quickly and fully inform of all ED initiatives.

f. County Representatives to the Regional Planning Alliance - If not among the elected officials above, the ED professional should personally meet with the county's representatives on the regional alliance's board of directors. Seek their participation and inputs concerning the county's strategic planning process. Subsequently, it may be appropriate for the ED professional to make a formal presentation to the members of the regional alliance about the county's economic development plans.

g. Mr. John Dickel, Rural County Chamber of Commerce - ED professional should personally meet with Mr. Dickel to invite him to participate in the planning process and to request his advice concerning potential ED initiatives that may be helpful to local businesses. Suggest that he might set up a workshop for interested local business people to meet the County's new ED professional, to learn about the forthcoming strategic planning process, and to discuss ways in which they can contribute to the planning process.

h. Head, U.S. Department of Agriculture's community development office - ED professional should personally meet with Agriculture's head person to invite him/her and staff members to participate in the strategic planning process. Inquire about the expertise of staff that may be helpful during the planning process. Ask about ongoing federal agricultural programs in Rural County. Also, inquire about current federal grants and anticipated grant opportunities for the county.

i. Large Landowners - ED professional should attempt to meet separately with each of the three large landowners, or their representatives, in the county. They should be invited to participate in the strategic planning process. Specifically, seek their inputs concerning potential ED initiatives related to agri-businesses in the county.

j. President, Central Citrus Savings Bank - ED professional should personally meet with the bank president to invite him/her to participate in the planning process and to request advice concerning potential ED initiatives that may be helpful to local businesses in general, and the banking industry in particular. Discreetly inquire about his/her relationship with the local managers at the two branches, which are also in Citrus County, of nationally recognized bank holding companies. As appropriate, follow up with visits to these local branch bank managers. Also, recalling that the Central Citrus bank's president resides in an adjacent, ask about ongoing ED initiatives in his/her home county.

k. Private School Leaders - ED professional should contact and attempt to meet with the leaders of the nine private schools, which are affiliated with various religious denominations. Invite interested private school leaders to participate in the planning process. Seek their perspectives on educational issues that may be impacting the county's economic development.

l. Newspaper Publisher - ED professional should meet with Ms. Koch and inform her of the initiation of the strategic planning process. Request her cooperation for coverage of the county's economic development efforts and promulgating announcements of public meetings in conjunction with economic development planning. Can Ms. Koch frequent opportunities to ask questions about economic development and the process of creating Rural County's economic development action plan.

In general, the ED professional should have frequent communications with influential community leaders. Means of communication include personal visits, letters and reports, workshops, and scheduled public meetings.

Furthermore, keep in mind that a way to maintain and benefit from the support already generated is to form an advisory board of elected officials and influential community leaders.

2. Strengths, weaknesses and a first draft of a vision statement.

Strengths:

Interstate Highway runs through Rural County  
U.S. Highway 837 runs through Rural County  
Perceived high quality of life  
Large agricultural interests/influence  
Local presence of USDA office

Weaknesses:

No interchange with Interstate Highway  
75% high school graduation rate  
Higher than average unemployment rate

Lower than average annual wage rate

Draft Vision Statement:

Rural County has a bright future ahead. The County's unique combination of country-style living and year-round Florida sunshine makes the area an attractive place to live, work, go to school, and engage in recreational activities. The County presents a friendly, clean, drug-free, and safe environment for residents and visitors alike. Quality of life continually moves UPWARD through better educational opportunities and creation of high-wage jobs.

With help from the USDA, a citrus processing plant that serves the county's agricultural interests is fully operational. The development of an interchange on the Interstate highway at State Road 20 expands access to City Corners and improves commerce and tourism in the area.. The interchange also makes the transportation of processed fruit more efficient and results in the opening of a locally owned trucking company to haul processed fruit.

Rural County has its own community college campus. The community college offers academic, technical and vocational courses. Through the combined efforts of the School Board and private school leaders, the high school graduation rate is steadily increasing. An available, skilled and educated workforce draws light industry and expanded medical facilities with above-average wage jobs to the County. The unemployment rate remains below the overall Florida rate.

Proactive leadership in the regional economic development alliance gains widespread recognition for Rural County as a dynamic, pro-business community.

### 3. Goals and Priorities.

a. Work with federal and state transportation officials to achieve the design and construction of an interchange linking the Interstate with State Road 20 and the City of Citrus Corners. This project should be promoted to improve transportation efficiency for goods, workers, and residents traveling into or out of the county; to improve access for potential industry relocation into the county; to promote increased traffic for existing businesses and tourism; and to increase desirability of the area for growth in population through residential relocation from surrounding areas. This effort should be one of the highest priority items sought to promote economic development.

b. In coordination with the County's major citrus growers and the local representative of USDA, construct a centrally located citrus processing plant, perhaps even as a non-profit organization or through an association of the 3 major landowners/citrus growers. Not only will implementation of this project reduce unemployment in the county (during construction and during citrus harvesting seasons), it may also be a means of cost savings

to the owners of citrus groves in the area through reduced transportation expenses to haul unprocessed fruit to plants outside the county.

c. Develop a Rural County satellite campus of a community college, whose main campus is in an adjacent county. Ideally, the satellite campus is located near Citrus Corners and provides academic, technical and vocational courses. The satellite campus will increase educational opportunities for residents of the county and result in a more highly qualified workforce. A skilled workforce will make it easier to attract desirable businesses to relocate to Rural County.

One reason for prioritizing goals is that the resources necessary for attaining the goals exceed available resources. The three goals suggested here - a highway interchange, a citrus processing plant, and a satellite community college campus - do not seem to compete for resources. In this limited list of goals, prioritization may not be needed. However, as the number of goals increases it becomes more likely that a prioritization scheme would be necessary.

4. Actions required, responsible agencies, and funding implications for the above goals.

a. Design and construct an interchange linking the Interstate with State Road 20 and the City of Citrus Corners.

ED professional (with assistance from county administrator and county attorney) offers resolution of County Commissioners supporting (taking responsibility for) the goal and forming an ad hoc citizens' committee to explore the design and construction of an interchange with the involvement of the County Roads Department, Florida Department of Transportation and federal transportation officials. With assistance from the ED professional the citizens' committee prepares and presents the detailed work plan to Commissioners. The funding implications at this point are minimal; the citizens' committee can be supported in kind with existing county resources.

b. Construct a centrally located citrus processing plant.

ED professional puts forth the idea of a citrus processing plant to County Commissioners and requests the Commissioners to promote a dialogue among the three principal landowners/corporations with groves in the county. ED professional conducts a site selection survey. Commissioners express a willingness to provide a zoning variance, if needed, to obtain best possible siting of this facility. The Rural County Chamber of Commerce takes overall responsibility for pursuing this initiative. Funding would likely occur in the form of capital investment by the corporations, however the county should be prepared to offer incentives.

c. Develop a Rural County satellite campus of a community college.

Working with Rural County's representatives to the regional alliance and through the regional alliance, request the leadership of community colleges in adjacent counties to

join in the effort to establish a satellite campus. A county representative to the regional alliance takes overall responsibility for this initiative. The responsible representative, with help from county staff, applies for state funding for land acquisition and construction of classroom facilities.

5. Problems that may need to be overcome include public opposition resulting from inadequate sharing of information, restrictive zoning regulations, and uncooperative parties as a result of diverse interests. In all cases, the solution is increased communication and involvement of everyone affected. Obtaining adequate funding for projects can also be a formidable obstacle.

### Burb County, Florida - Case Study 2 Sample Responses.

#### 1. Burb County, Florida's leadership and stakeholders.

Elected officials:

a. Board of County Commissioners - ED professional should endeavor to maintain personal contact with the Commissioners and invite each Board member's participation in the planning process. At a minimum a monthly report of the community's ED status should be sent to the Commissioners. An effort should be made at the meeting with each commissioner to determine individual priorities, issues, and obtain input for goal-making based on how each sees the needs of the community. Regularly attend public Board of County Commissioners meetings in order to be responsive to ED issues and initiatives addressed during the meetings.

b. Mayors and City Council Members - ED professional should make an appointment with the mayors to initiate personal contact and inform each mayor of the forthcoming ED strategic planning process. If the city employs an ED professional on staff, make the appointment with the mayor in coordination with the city's ED professional. Seek the mayor's ideas about potential ED initiatives that may be of particular benefit to his/her city. Invite the mayor's participation in the planning process. With the mayor's concurrence, seek a place on the agenda at the next public City Council meeting. Subsequent to the public meeting, attempt to meet each Council member individually to solicit ideas on potential ED initiatives and their participation in the strategic planning process. At a minimum a monthly report of the community's ED status should be sent to the mayor and each City Council member.

c. Burb County School Board Members- ED professional should request a spot on the agenda at the next public School Board meeting in order to introduce himself/herself to the Board and the members of the community who are attending the meeting. Subsequent to the public meeting, attempt to meet each Board member individually to solicit their participation in the strategic planning process. Seek out their opinions concerning potential ED initiatives particularly relevant to the K through 12 educational

issues. At a minimum a monthly report of the community's ED status should be sent to each School Board member.

Other influential community leaders:

d. County Representatives to the Western Consortium regional economic development alliance - If not among the elected officials above, the ED professional should personally meet with the county's representatives on the regional alliance's board of directors. Seek their participation and inputs concerning the county's strategic planning process. Subsequently, it may be appropriate for the ED professional to make a formal presentation to the members of the regional alliance about the county's economic development plans. This group of regional planners and economic development professionals will want to be involved and provide assistance in many aspects of Burb County's economic development effort.

e. Washington College Leaders - ED professional should personally meet with the President of Washington College to invite participation in the strategic planning process and to seek advice about potential economic development initiatives. It may be appropriate to first meet with the director to the college's SBDC and ask the director to set up an appointment with the college's president. Discuss the college's current regional ED activities with both the president and SBDC director.

f. Chambers of Commerce - ED professional should personally meet with the leadership of local Chambers to invite their participation in the planning process and to request advice concerning potential ED initiatives that may be helpful to local businesses. Suggest that workshops may be set up for interested local business people to learn about the forthcoming strategic planning process and to discuss ways in which they can contribute to the planning process.

g. Burb Community College Leadership - ED professional should personally meet with the President of the community college to invite participation in the strategic planning process and to seek advice about potential economic development initiatives. A meeting with the Dean of the Stanford satellite campus might also be fruitful.

h. Director, Shannon Airport - ED professional should meet with the airport's director. Often economic development issues and initiatives are transportation-related. Invite the director to participate in the strategic planning process.

f. Business Leaders from Major Burb County Employers - ED professional should develop relationships with individuals in this group who could provide input for issues and initiatives relative to the strategic plan. Include local bankers, who should have a solid understanding of the effect of economic development initiatives on sectors of the local economy.

g. Newspaper Editors - ED professional should meet with the editor of the *Blurb* and other county newspaper to inform him/her of the initiation of the strategic planning

process. Request his/her cooperation for coverage of the county's economic development efforts and promulgating announcements of public meetings in conjunction with economic development planning. Can the editor frequent opportunities to ask questions about economic development and the process of creating Burb County's economic development action plan.

In general, the ED professional should have frequent communications with influential community leaders. Means of communication include personal visits, letters and reports, workshops, and scheduled public meetings.

Furthermore, keep in mind that a way to maintain and benefit from the support already generated is to form an advisory board of elected officials and influential community leaders.

## 2. Strengths, weaknesses, a first-draft of a vision statement, strategic planning time span.

Strengths.

- a. Higher than average population growth rate
- b. Proximity of Silicon Interstate
- c. County is a participant in regional ED alliance
- d. Diversified workforce
- e. Aggressive secondary educational facility planning/construction
- f. Local airport

Weaknesses.

- a. Cost of infrastructure improvements
- b. High level of commuting to work
- c. Slow tourist industry
- d. Perceived low level of local spending by residents
- e. Limited local upper education opportunities
- f. Small size of local airport

Draft vision statement:

In the years ahead Burb County is an exciting and vibrant place to live and work. The County offers its almost one million residents a variety of choices for urban or suburban life-styles.

The attraction of high-tech firms to the region provides above-average-wage job opportunities and impetus for further economic growth throughout the county. Burb County's diversified and talented workforce is highly successful in competing for these good jobs; the county's unemployment rate is the lowest in the Western Consortium. Tourism continues to rise in popularity as the number of visitors to the county steadily

increases. The Burb County Tourist Council successfully markets a variety of venues to appeal to the more than 50 million visitors to Florida every year. The Shannon Airport has daily commuter flights to Tallahassee, Miami, and Orlando. The increase in tourism and business activity creates an expanded property tax base and greater sales tax revenues that adequately support the infrastructure needs of a growing population.

An aggressive K through 12 school-building program contributes to an average pupil-teacher ratio of 22:1. Almost 1,000 students graduate from high school in Burb County each year. More than half go on to post-secondary educational opportunities. Washington College, Burb Community College, and the state university offer post-secondary educational opportunities within the county. The state university branch campus is co-located with our satellite community college campus in Stanford. Students no longer have to travel outside of the county to attend upper-level undergraduate courses.

Consistent with its contribution of more than 25% of the Western Consortium's population, Burb County maintains a significant leadership presence within the regional economic development alliance. Burb County receives a proportionate share of economic development assistance from the alliance and is able to leverage its county resources through proactive participation in the alliance. Burb County is widely acknowledged throughout the Southeastern U.S. as a progressive, dynamic, and pro-business county with diverse urban and suburban communities.

Strategic planning time span.

A 2- to 5-year span for a community's economic development action plan is generally appropriate. In this case, the Director of the Economic Development Department has suggested a 5-year plan. There does not appear to be any reason to oppose the 5-year time span. One consideration, however, is the period covered by the Western Consortium's strategic plan. It may be desirable to have a coincident planning cycle with the consortium to maximize the leverage-effect on the county's plan.

### 3. Goals and Priorities.

a. Finance the expansion of public infrastructure to support a growing population. Our goal is to finance the expansion by supporting development activities expected to increase tax revenue *without increasing tax rates*. We support the private development of residential and commercial properties in order to broaden the property tax base. We also support the actions of the WC to develop a regional high-tech cluster and have our own goal (see paragraph b, next below) for business recruitment. We expect that a growing high-tech cluster will be the catalyst for increased taxable sales within Burb County. And, we support the promotion of tourism (see paragraph c, below) as another source of increased sales tax revenue for the county.

b. Identify the kinds of firms that would be the suppliers and customers of the three high-tech firms recruited by the WC. Establish a recruitment program to attract the kinds of

business so identified as a “good fit” for the high-tech cluster. For business recruitment use a progression of 1) direct mail and telemarketing, 2) follow-up programs, 3) visits to firms in targeted industries, 4) attendance at trade shows, and 5) networking via trade associations and existing local businesses.

c. Establish the Burb County Tourist Council to promote tourism in the county. The council is to be established as a joint effort of the public sector, representing the County Commissioners and mayors, and private sector, represented by volunteer local business leaders. The role of the council is to identify existing tourist attractions in the county and to propose development of new attractions. The council would also prepare a marketing plan designed to increase the number of visitors to Burb County each year with the ultimate objective of increasing the county’s flow of sales tax revenues from visitors’ spending.

One reason for prioritizing goals is that the resources necessary for attaining the goals exceed available resources. The three goals suggested here - a highway interchange, a citrus processing plant, and a satellite community college campus - do not seem to compete for resources. In this limited list of goals, prioritization may not be needed. However, as the number of goals increases it becomes more likely that a prioritization scheme would be necessary.

4. Actions required, responsible agencies, and funding implications for the above goals.

a. Finance the expansion of public infrastructure to support a growing population.

Because this goal involves three parallel initiatives, the Director of the county’s Economic Development Department is best positioned to take overall responsibility. Set up an *ad hoc* committee to prepare a work plan in support of this goal. Committee members should be representatives of the agencies involved in implementation of actions to achieve the goal. Residential and commercial development would involve county planners, the permitting process, and managers of infrastructure, i.e. roads, water and sewer, public schools, electrical power, telephone and cable TV connections, etc. Business recruitment involves ED professionals at the county and city levels, as well as the WC. The promotion of tourism is to be undertaken by the soon-to-be-formed Burb County Tourist Council. Funding in support of the *ad hoc* committee should come from the current county budget. Additional funding may have to be identified as the committee prepares its work plan. Public and private funding sources have to be developed to support the Tourist Council.

b. Establish a recruitment program to attract businesses that are a “good fit” for the regional high-tech cluster to Burb County.

Business recruitment is the responsibility of the county’s Economic Development Department. The Chamber of Commerce may also take an active role. The Economic Development Department will need financial resources to pursue the progression of recruitment strategies outlined for this goal. The strategies are supported by County

Commissioners. The Economic Development Department should include funding for their implementation in the county's next budget submission.

c. Establish the Burb County Tourist Council.

Under the aegis of the Burb County Economic Development Department (see paragraph a, above), a detailed work plan for the establishment of the Tourist Council should be prepared by the *ad hoc* committee. The committee's work plan can include initial funding options. Once established, the Council should prepare its own work plan and develop funding sources for carrying out its mission to promote tourism in the county. Tourism development should start at the local level to market attractions to potential visitors through travel motivation techniques. In order to get visitors to come to an area, it is necessary to provide a pleasing atmosphere with a variety of venues. Downtown areas in the cities can often support special districts, such as antique shops, art exhibits, and historical sites. These districts can give the day visitor an opportunity to understand or reflect on the past while providing a variety of restaurant and retail establishment activities for the present. Because interest in golfing and other sports venues has grown in recent years, land development projects should be promoted to support sporting activities. Attraction of golfers and other sports enthusiasts from outside the county will be an added benefit to local restaurant and retail businesses, thereby increasing sales tax revenues.

5. Problems that may need to be overcome include: 1) some stakeholders' resistance to change, 2) lack of funding, 3) miscommunication of goals and intentions due to the large number of people involved, and 4) misunderstanding of the goals and/or funding implications by the general public due to insufficient publicity and public involvement during the strategic planning process.