



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 26-00134

Agenda Date: 2/24/2026

Agenda Item Name:

Presentation of Economic Development Advisory Committee Workplan and Accomplishments

Presenter:

Sarah Rockwell, Ph.D. EDAC Chair; Sean McLendon, Economic Development Manager

Description:

Presentation of EDAC's 2025 accomplishments and 2026 workplan.

Recommended Action:

Hear presentation

Prior Board Motions:

NA

Fiscal Note:

NA

Strategic Guide:

Economic Development

Background:

The Alachua County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) was re-established as an advisory committee through Resolution 21-64. It includes nine voting members, one alternate, and six non-voting representatives from local institutions like the University of Florida, Santa Fe College, and the City of Gainesville. The committee's main goal is to give policy recommendations to the BoCC to support sustainable economic development. Per the current resolution, the committee is set to conclude on December 31, 2026. Staff will return in the coming months with a new enabling resolution.

FY2025 Accomplishments Summary

In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, EDAC worked on key changes to the County's economic strategy and how it connects with stakeholders:

- **Departmental Collaboration:** Held a joint workshop with the Tourist Development Council (TDC) to discuss shared opportunities and analysis of the current business climate.
- **EcoLoop and Innovation:** Unanimously recommended amending the Alachua County "EcoLoop" Planned Development to allow for non-smokestack industries, including high-technology, aerospace, and semiconductor manufacturing.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Provided guidance on major initiatives such as the Airport Gateway Project, the "Forward Focus Eastern Alachua County" study, and the development of the county's first Climate Action Plan.

- **Space Economy:** Engaged with the Astraeus Space Institute to explore the development of a local space workforce and educational pathways.

2026 Workplan Strategic Priorities

The 2026 Workplan aims to make the County's leadership in regional growth more official:

- **EDO Transition:** Providing guidance as Alachua County formalizes its expanded role as the community's Economic Development Organization (EDO).
- **Comprehensive Plan Updates:** Guiding the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process for the Economic Element of the Comprehensive Plan, focusing on three pillars: Education/Healthcare, Food Systems, and Quality of Life.
- **Workforce Development:** Promoting technical education through partnerships like the Ralph Cellon Institute for Advanced Manufacturing to support recruitment in high-wage sectors.
- **Aerospace and Tech:** Continued focus on the aerospace and aviation industry through dedicated workshops and K-12 educational engagement.

Future Outlook

A new resolution will go to the Board before the committee's term ends in December 2026. This resolution will confirm the County's larger role as the main Economic Development Organization and make sure the committee's advice matches this broader mission.