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**Information Gathering
and Key Takeaways**



Stakeholder Engagement

Over the course of this project, the project team conducted three steering committee workshops (~60 participants each), two workforce partner workshops (~30 participants each) and one Regional Forum workshop which included roughly 100 participants.

In addition, the project team conducted 13 individual interviews with key leaders in education, city government, workforce development, and industries. Additionally we implemented and analyzed over 1,300 community survey responses. Seven half-day county workshops, with leaders and stakeholders, were conducted and another 17 focus groups, with roughly 150 attendees, were held with representatives from a wide variety of fields including transportation, land use, public policy, and business development.

Additionally, the team met with organizations that focus on addressing poverty issues, representatives from all of the target industries, degree completion advocates, and the Civic Council. The stakeholder engagement informed the following workforce themes, goals, strategies and tactics.



Talent, Education & Workforce

STRENGTHS

- Educational attainment in Northeast Florida at the associate's degree level exceeds national and statewide averages. The percent of workers with degrees has increased 3% since 2012.
- The region's workforce has grown at a faster pace than available jobs.
- Survey participants recognize the quality of the region's colleges and universities as one of its top five strengths. The region boasts a higher concentration of bachelor's degrees in Science & Engineering - related fields relative to the US average.
- Earn Up is a strength and a beacon to employers that area leaders are proactively improving educational attainment.
- The region's workforce programs for veterans are frequently cited by employers as one reason that they are located in Northeast Florida.

WEAKNESSES

- Educational attainment in Northeast Florida at the bachelor's and higher level is improving, but trails the US average.
- Due to the lack of transportation availability and geographic distance of education/service offerings, workers in some parts of Northeast Florida find it difficult to pursue additional education or access career assistance.
- Regional employers and leaders have voiced concerns about their ability to find a sufficient number of employees in certain fields, given the region's relatively low levels of unemployment.
- 42% of those surveyed for this strategy said that they are not aware of career opportunities or pathways in the region.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The region consistently attracts recent college graduates, contributing to the region's rising levels of educational attainment. Maintaining this trend, as well as investing in education programs and career pathway awareness at home, will greatly benefit the region's economy.
- Young professionals in Northeast Florida have higher than average educational attainment at the associate's degree level. Promoting this fact should help attract businesses seeking skilled tradespeople.
- The region is home to numerous colleges and universities that provide a continuous supply of new, skilled workers. The quality of regional post-secondary institutions is perceived by residents to be a core regional strength that should be expanded.
- New leadership has recently transitioned into many higher education institutions, providing opportunities to partner with institutional leaders on economic development and workforce development initiatives.

THREATS

- An aging population and the impending Baby Boomer retirement is a significant issue for many industries. It is beginning to limit the availability of workers in key fields such as production and engineering. This threat impacts many regions in the US, including Northeast Florida.
- Rising housing costs, especially in and around urban cores, have pushed a growing number of workers away from established employment centers. The misalignment between where people live and work, plus growing issues around the availability of transportation and highway congestion, could make hiring and worker retention more difficult.



Key Takeaways

Throughout conversations, focus groups, community responses and workshops conducted during the Workforce Strategy phase of the Elevate Northeast Florida process, the need for a talented workforce and cohesive education, training, and workforce system was expressed. In order for Northeast Florida to continue inclusive economic growth and be able to compete on a global scale, talent and business attraction is imperative. With an almost full employment labor market, there is the need to have a labor pool with the right skills, access, and support along a career pathway. The ability to attract and retain talent in the region is the key to success for any community – particularly in Northeast Florida where the population growth, since 2010, has increased at more than twice that of the national growth rate.

Talent attraction, retention, and development needs to be at the forefront in all standing JAXUSA engagements and is certainly core to the Elevate Northeast Florida Workforce Strategy. Infusing messages with language that bolsters, leverages, and builds upon existing talent initiatives will create a more regional, national, and even global understanding of how invested and committed this region is to creating a workforce system and talent supply that is ready to meet the needs of both the current and future economy. The following strategy provides five key themes and goals that Northeast Florida should adopt, implement, and sustain. This strategy includes a deep set of goals, strategies, and tactics, as well as examples of best practices that can be implemented to guide the action planning and implementation of these efforts. The strategy is intended to be a living document that the stakeholders and regional leadership should use to guide investments, programmatic solutions, and coordinated and collaborative efforts in order to achieve a world-class workforce system in Northeast Florida.

This strategy is reflective of the talent attraction, retention, development, and system alignment goals as identified through the Elevate Northeast Florida process. The subsequent goals, strategies, and tactics encompass efforts and activities, currently underway or in the process of being deployed, by all of the key stakeholders in the Northeast Florida labor and talent development market. Elevate Northeast Florida Workforce Strategy lays out a comprehensive plan that will increase coordination among employers, educators, workforce development leaders, economic development organizations, and other regional skill development efforts in order to create a highly skilled, highly competitive workforce that will spur and drive economic growth. This strategy is to be lead by leaders across the region and across systems. This is not a single source strategy with one main actor leading efforts long term. This is an ambitious plan with bold and innovative goals which require partnership, coordination, and communication across many systems to achieve better talent alignment within the region.

