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MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

THIS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ("MOA") is made and entered into by and between the State of Florida, Department of Commerce ("Commerce"), and the City of Chipley, Florida ("City"). Commerce and the City are sometimes referred to herein individually as a "Party" and collectively as the "Parties."

I. Background and Purpose of MOA

A. The purpose of this MOA is to document the terms and conditions of the implementation of the Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO).

B. The Governor of Florida recognizes that successful rural communities are essential to the overall success of the State of Florida's economy and quality of life, yet many rural communities struggle to maintain, support or enhance job creation activities and to generate revenues for critical government services.

C. Florida's Legislature also recognizes that rural communities continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to significantly improve their economies, and as such, section 288.0656, Florida Statutes (F.S.), establishes the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) within Commerce and authorizes the participation of State and regional organizations in this initiative. Section 288.0656 (7)(a), F.S., provides for the designation of up to three RAOs (formerly Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACECs) under F.S., 1999-2013). RAOs include rural communities, or a region composed of rural communities, including rural counties as identified in section 288.0656(2)(d) and (e), F.S., that have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events, severe or chronic distress, a natural disaster or an event that presents a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.

D. Pursuant to section 288.0656(7), F.S., representatives of the State and regional agencies and organizations comprising the REDI met on **March 28, 2025**, and recommended the re-designation of the North West region composed of the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington; the area in Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway; the area in Okaloosa County that is contiguous with Walton County, within the area east of State Road 85 and north of Interstate 10 and all unincorporated areas therein, including the City of Laurel Hill and the unincorporated areas of Auburn, Deerland, and Svea; and the area in Bay County that is contiguous with Calhoun, Jackson, and Washington Counties, within the

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area north of Scotts Ferry Road and east of Highway 231 and the area north of Highway 388 lying west of Highway 231 and east of Highway 79 are designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity**.** On **July 8, 2025**, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order Number **25-141**, which re-designated the Northwest RAO for another five-year term with an expiration date of **July 8, 2030.**

II. The Participating Community

A. Pursuant to section 288.0656(7)(b), F.S., and Executive Order Number **25-141**, RAO designation shall be contingent upon the execution of a MOA between the Parties. Section 288.0656(7)(b), F.S., requires this MOA to specify the terms and conditions of the designation, including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities of the City to take actions designed to facilitate the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the area, as well as the recruitment of new businesses to the area.

B. The City agrees that fulfillment of the following duties and responsibilities, as reasonably determined by REDI, is required for recommendation by REDI for continued designation as a RAO.

C. The City shall:

1. Designate a specific contact person from among City elected or appointed officials to serve as a point of contact in all matters and activities relating to the Northwest RAO;

2. Designate a specific person from a non-profit organization actively engaged in economic development within the City, to serve as the single point of contact to represent and provide input on all economic development matters and activities relating to the Northwest RAO;

3. Include contact information for designees on Exhibit A, attached hereto, (these designees may be the same designee to serve as the representative to other similar organizations); the City shall inform Commerce in writing by either mail or email of any changes to the specified persons within ten (10) business days of the change; and

4. Actively participate in the RAO regional economic development organization by attending meetings and taking part in regional economic development initiatives to help build knowledge and skillsets required to compete more effectively for job creation projects. Commerce strongly encourages the City's participation in initiatives sponsored by the regional organization such as national and regional marketing events, trade shows, regional branding, and training programs, and the development of a multi-year strategic plan.

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III. Implementation and Duration

A. Pursuant to Executive Order Number **25-141**, the designation of the North West RAO affecting the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington; the area in Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway; the area in Okaloosa County that is contiguous with Walton County, within the area east of State Road 85 and north of Interstate 10 and all unincorporated areas therein, including the City of Laurel Hill and the unincorporated areas of Auburn, Deerland, and Svea; and the area in Bay County that is contiguous with Calhoun, Jackson, and Washington Counties, within the area north of Scotts Ferry Road and east of Highway 231 and the area north of Highway 388 lying west of Highway 231 and east of Highway 79 shall be in effect for five years and will expire on **July 8, 2030**.

A. REDI may recommend the RAO designation and this MOA be terminated or continued based on performance under this MOA.

B. This MOA shall take effect immediately upon full and proper execution by all Parties and supersedes and replaces any and all previous such RACEC and RAO agreement(s) between the Parties.

C. This MOA shall expire on **July 8, 2030,** unless terminated earlier.

D. Both Parties shall review this MOA annually. If revisions are needed, notification shall be given to both Parties in writing of the specific changes desired with the proposed amendment language and the reasons for the revisions. With the mutual consent of both Parties, the proposed changes shall become effective when both Parties have duly executed an amendment to this MOA.

E. The City may terminate this MOA at any time upon written notice to Commerce.

F. Designation as a RAO is, by statute and Executive Order, contingent upon execution of a MOA between the Parties. REDI shall recommend the RAO designation be terminated if this MOA is not duly executed or if this MOA is terminated and another MOA is not timely and duly executed in its place.

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IV. EXECUTION

By affixing her or his signature herein below, each undersigned official represents and warrants that she or he has read the above MOA and the Exhibit A attached hereto and understands each section and paragraph.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, and in consideration of the mutual covenants set forth above and, in the Attachments and Exhibits hereto, the Parties have caused to be executed this MOA by their undersigned officials duly authorized.

CITY OF CHIPLEY, FLORIDA	**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**
By _____ Signature	**By** _____ Signature
Title **Tracy Andrews Mayor**	**Title** _____
Date _____	**Date** _____

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency, subject only to full and proper execution by the Parties.

OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

By: _____

Approved Date: _____

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EXHIBIT A – DESIGNATED CONTACTS
City of Chipley, Florida

Contact Information for an Elected or Appointed Official

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Contact Information for One Person from
a Non-Profit Organization Engaged in Economic Development

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please complete this page and return with the signed MOA. The City is required to inform Commerce of any changes to this information within ten business days of a change.