

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

THIS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (“MOA”) is made and entered into by and between the State of Florida, Department of Economic Opportunity (“DEO”) and Franklin County, Florida (“County”). DEO and the County 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 DEO and authorizes the participation of State and regional organizations in this initiative. Paragraph 288.0656(7)(a), F.S., provides for the designation of up to three RAOs. RAOs include rural communities or a region composed of rural communities, including rural **counties as identified in section 288.0656 (2)(d)-(e)** 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 subsection 288.0656(7), F.S., representatives of the State and regional agencies and organizations comprising the REDI met on **June 3, 2020** and recommended that the Governor re-designate the Northwest Rural Area of Opportunity (“Northwest RAO”) composed of the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, Washington and the area in Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway as a RAO. On **July 8, 2020**, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order **20-170**, which re-designated the Northwest RAO for another five-year term with an expiration date of **July 8, 2025**.

II. The Participating Community

- A. Pursuant to paragraph 288.0656(7)(b), F.S., and Executive Order **20-170**, RAO designation shall be contingent upon the execution of a MOA between the Parties. Paragraph 288.0656(7)(b) requires this MOA to specify the terms and conditions of the designation, including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities of the county and any participating municipalities 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 County agrees that fulfillment of the following duties and responsibilities, as reasonably determined by REDI, are required for recommendation by REDI for continued RAO designation.
- C. The County shall:
 - 1. designate a specific contact person from among County 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 County, to serve as the as single point of contact to represent and provide input on all economic development matters and activities relating to the Northwest RAO, and to receive and process leads and referrals from EFI;
 - 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 County shall inform DEO in writing by either mail or email of any changes to the specified persons within ten (10) business days of the change;

III. Implementation and Duration

- A. Pursuant to Executive Order **20-170**, the designation of the Northwest RAO affecting the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, Washington, and the area in Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway, is designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO) with an expiration date of **July 8, 2025**.
- B. REDI may recommend the RAO designation and this MOA be terminated or continued based on performance under this MOA.
- C. This MOA shall take effect immediately upon full and proper execution by all Parties and supersedes and replaces any and all previous RAO agreement(s) between the Parties.

- D. This MOA shall expire on **July 8, 2025** unless terminated earlier.
- E. 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.
- F. The County may terminate this MOA at any time upon written notice to DEO.
- G. RAO designation 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.

- The remainder of this page has been intentionally left blank. -

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 Exhibit A attached hereto, the Parties have caused to be executed this MOA by their duly authorized undersigned officials.

FRANKLIN COUNTY, FLORIDA**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

By _____
Signature

Title **Noah Lockley, Jr.
Chairman**

Date _____

By _____
Signature

Title **Mario Rubio, Director,
Division of Community
Development**

Date _____

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

**OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

By: _____

Approved Date: _____

EXHIBIT A – DESIGNATED CONTACTS
Franklin County, 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 County is required to inform DEO of any changes to this information within ten (10) business days of a change.