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Levy County Quarterly Department Report

Department Information

Name of Department	Levy County Economic Development (ED) and Levy County Tourism Development (TD)/Levy County Visitors Bureau
Name of Department Head	Tisha Whitehurst
Department Mission	Tourism Development (LCVB) oversees the development and marketing of Levy County as a vacation and tourism destination. The goal of the LCVB is to generate visitation to Levy County and thereby generate tax revenues for the county, including but not limited to, sales tax, tourist development tax, and fuel taxes. Economic Development oversees opportunities for new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses in Levy County. Economic Development is tasked with assisting in locating businesses that would be an appropriate fit for a rural community. We want to enhance the employment opportunities for our citizens in Levy County while working to preserve our way of life. Staff help promote quality training for employees of existing businesses as well as work force training for new businesses.

Department Staffing

	Fourth Quarter 2024	First Quarter 2025	Second Quarter 2025	Third Quarter 2025	Fourth Quarter 2025
Number of Budgeted Full Time Employees	2	2	2	2	
Number of Actual Full Time Employees	2	2	2	2	
Number of Budgeted Part Time Employees	0	0	0	0	
Number of Actual Part Time Employees	0	0	0	0	
Comment					

Department Deliverables

Deliverable <i>(To be determined by the Department Head)</i>	Fourth Quarter 2024	First Quarter 2025	Second Quarter 2025	Third Quarter 2025	Fourth Quarter 2025
<u>Tourism Development</u>					
Cedar Key Clam Trail	6 Fiberglass Clams; Delivered and painting; not open to the public yet	5 Clams are Completed and open to the public; new promotional materials will continue to be added; the 6th clam is nearing completion by CKHS Art Department	Cedar Key Chamber and team has requested an increase to the trail-planning to add 4 more clams; finished clam maps with new design to feature the 6th clams, and adding the disclaimer that 4 more coming soon	Staff are working to identify 4 additional locations for the new clams, working on themes and designs for artists; Levy County won the 2025 SUNsational Award- Cedar Key Clam Trail 2nd Place - Community Outreach Program	
Website Enhancements www.visitlevy.com	Completed; we are always updating as the need arises	Staff continue to update the website as information changes; Updated “look” coming soon, this is in the draft stage	Working with web designer to develop a user friendly website with a new look; new website is tablet and mobile friendly; an interactive map portion of county boat ramps and parks is in development as well; updated website will be released in 2 phases; second phase is the interactive map; new website with tablet	Phase 2 of the website is live this includes the interactive map and additional tabs and continued photos and videos; We have new media content-photo and videos	

			and mobile version available now ; launch date for phase 1 6/16/2025 and phase 2 Fall 2025		
Newsletters/ Advertising	Publish a monthly newsletter with a theme for each month	Continuing to publish newsletters, signs ups are available on the website as well	Continuing to publish newsletters, signs ups are available on the website as well; events are selected from the events calendar;	Update look for newsletters and sign-ups are still available online as well as through requests. Shared newsletters with VF and Task Force; Advertising campaigns continue for the entire area, see attached ads for the quarter	
Recovery Campaign/ Rapid Response	Working with VF to develop a destination related recovery campaign to highlight effort from the storms	Continues to air, campaign with VF will be completed in late Spring, value remains \$160,000	Closed recovery campaign in May (run Feb-May 2025); The total media buy was \$166,666.67 paid by VF and at no cost to Levy County. Results: 13,486,135 total impressions, 21,990 clicks, and 1,855,424 total video completions	Rapid Response Campaign is in the infant stages, we want to have a plan for small businesses post event	
North Florida Trails Project (Map and Website) Featuring: Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy		Trail Map is in final stage, Taylor County joined and required a few additional revisions. Website is in final stage as well	Map is at the printer and the website revisions are completed for all 4 counties-Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Taylor	Map was printed on July 21;Map was distributed as of August and the website for	

and Taylor County				this project is live; additional ad was purchased for VF publication for 2026	
Watermelon Trail Chiefland, FL		Designing 6 fiberglass Watermelons; Site selection continuing in Chiefland with the help for the City. Working to select local artist for the project	All 6 sites confirmed and watermelon artist confirmed as well. Watermelons will likely be delivered in 6-8 weeks from production date.	Production began in early August. The City of Chiefland is accepting the Watermelon sculptures, we will work together to have the painting completed by local artist.	
Florida Huddle 2025-WEC		Attended daily 2/3-5/2025; The networking event educates DMO's on new ideas, opportunity to meet with tour operators and guides, as well as other hosts; VF funded the opportunity to Levy County for 1 staff to attend as an effort to provide additional support for a hurricane impacted county	Awaiting updated from the Task Force on the HUDDLE results from the event; these results will be used to better market and partner with tour operators in 2026	Task Force provided some additional feedback on international destinations for advertising opportunities	
Visit Natural North Florida-The Original Florida Tourism Task Force		Levy County hosted the "Task Force" on February 20,2025 in Bronson; REMI Training/Information offered at this meeting to attendees	Levy County attends monthly; March meeting canceled due to Rural Day and Tourism Day	Attending meetings, Marketing Committee meeting on 8/21/2025-TW is the Chair of the	

				Marketing Committee for the coming year meeting on 9/29/2025	
Parks and Recreation Enhancements 2025		Working with Parks staff to enhance amenities at Blue, Beck and Shell Mound-grills and tables	We have started the Shell Mound enhancement and improvement plan; application is due in October 2025; picnic tables and grills have been installed at several county parks, Blue, Beck, Hwy 40, etc.	Working on the Shell Mound grant with the engineer and staff; Grant was submitted on 9/29 by Grants staff	
Parks and Recreation Kiosk Project		Working with Parks staff to purchase information Kiosks for Devils Hammock, Blue, Beck and Shell Mound	Kiosks have been ordered; Installation by parks staff; Devil's Hammock will have a kiosk as well as the other county parks	Staff continue to work with the Park's Department to enhance to county parks and boat ramps	
Rural County Day-2025		Staff hosted a booth at Rural County Day on March 20, 2025 in Tallahassee; Meet with elected officials, agency officials and other rural counties	Follow up on information requests via phone, networking with attendees to better serve the interests of Levy County at the state level. Follow up with lobbyist and elected officials		

National Travel and Tourism Week- NTTW 2025			Proclamation to declare NTTW 2025 at the May 6 th BOCC meeting; Social Media campaign to share opportunities to visit destinations in Levy Co.; Share with VNNF and VF for additional coverage; future ad development to support the visitation to Levy through the rest of the year		
<u>Economic Development</u>					
Economic Development- Training			Staff currently completed all of the initial training provided by NFEDP; more training to follow in the next round in the fall 2025; regular meetings and phone calls with NFEDP staff, monthly call to review leads and projects	Staff continue to take online training; regular meeting with NFEDP staff; Joined Florida Economic Development	
Site Selection Group-Duke Energy Meeting			Commissioners and staff hosted the Site Selection Group on May 21, 2025 at the Government Center and then toured with the group at a possible location in Chiefland; follow up meeting on June 26 th to review the newly developed Strategic Development Plan and conceptual designs; Follow up meeting was a	Staff are working with Duke Energy to continue to promote the identified location as viable site; Staff continue to meet with Duke, Site Selection, and Economic Development	

			success; next meeting will be scheduled in the fall	team members to further the projects.	
Infographic ad and REMI Models for Levy County			Staff are working to develop additional information about the economic status of Levy County, this information will be available and can be used to apply for grants, address weakness in our economy, and build a stronger community; this is provided to Levy County from the Tourism Task Force at no cost to the county	On 7/17/2025 staff met with Task Force to confirm the REMI models and infographic information	
GIS Mapping			Working to develop the GIS maps needed for economic development projects, these maps include infrastructure and other transportation information for projects, and future allocation requests;	Staff working with Engineering department to learn and use GIS mapping for project development	
Economic Development Website Page			Staff with the help of the BOCC office are working to establish a webpage within the BOCC website to showcase the benefits available through ED	Staff continue to develop content for the county website; content is growing and changes will	

				be greater in the 2026	
Career Source			Staff asked to join the quarterly committee meeting with Career Source; Working with Career Source on pre-MOU requirements for Levy County; monthly meetings scheduled to work with CS as well as local small businesses to enhance training opportunities	Completed all necessary items on the Quarterly report and exceeded all 4 of the categories as defined in the MOU for this quarter; Staff have also attended first regional meeting as a member, invoice from \$7,500 approved for submission by 10/15/2025; submission was submitted before the due date	
Nature Coast Business Development Council-NCBDC			Staff updated NCBDC on ED projects on 6/19/2025; NCBDC voted to dissolve the council upon all debts paid	Levy County staff continue to work with the NCBDC board to dissolve; continue the project list provided in April 2025	

Duke Energy Foundation Economic Development Grant Program			With the assistance of the Levy County Grants Department, staff applied for a grant opportunity and received the award announcement on June 26, in the amount of \$10,000. These funds are designated for ED strategic planning, marketing, and research initiatives resulting in new jobs and investment in the communities we serve.	Duke Energy announced Levy County as an awardee on 8/14/2025; Funds will be used to create content and materials to market and promote Levy County as an Economic Development location for the future	
North Florida Economic Development Partnership- NFEDP			Staff are working weekly with NFEDP team to develop best practices for Levy County ED as well as to collaborate on the current project list and develop appropriate direction for ED projects and well as complete RFI for each requested project; Levy County staff are working to review the list NFEPD has for available properties	Staff have meet weekly with the NFEDP team to discuss the project management of current project; current leads are in progress;	
Florida Jobs Growth Grant- FJGG				Staff worked to submit a grant application in the amount of \$1.5 million to support Economic Development in Levy	

				County; Staff had a follow up meeting with Florida Commerce on 9/30- award is pending	
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VF-VISIT Florida

CKHS- Cedar Key High School

DMO-Destination Marketing Organization

REMI-Regional Economic Models, Inc.

TD-Tourism Development

ED-Economic Development

NFEDP-North Florida Economic Development Partnership

RFI-Request for Information

GIS-Geographic Information System

FJGG-Florida Jobs Growth Grant

Department Highlights

The Levy County Division of Economic Development and Tourism Development is working to enhance the resources available to the small, local businesses in Levy County. The combined efforts of these departments is to promote and market existing small businesses in Levy County as well as enhance the opportunities for these businesses. I have attached some of the ads for the second quarter to highlight the quality of the marketing as well as the ad locations. The recovery campaign ad locations: Pandora Audio, Flipboard Video campaign, Flipboard Video RV campaign, online RV video featured on YouTube, online Levy County video featured on YouTube, Amazon Native RV display, and Amazon Native Levy County display. Adverting for the 3rd Quarter is attached.

Staff are working with Career Source, our local chambers, and business owners and managers to understand the business needs and develop marketing and promotional plans for the next quarter. Staff is developing the infographic to depict the economic impact the local businesses have on our tax base. This should be available by the next quarter.

The Economic Development Department in conjunction with the Levy County Grants Department was awarded a \$10,000 grant for strategic planning, marketing and research initiatives resulting in new jobs and investments in the communities we serve. A limited number of proposals were selected and a formal application process will follow; Levy County was awarded the grant on 6/26/2025 according to Duke Energy Foundation Economic Development Grant Program. Levy County staff are planning to use the funds for marketing and research for economic development materials. Staff are working to secure funds for to support an Economic Development project (the Grocer Project) in the amount of

\$1.5 million. These funds support infrastructure that will lead to job creation in the area of Chiefland as well as bring additional services needed in the area. The “Grocer Project” could lead to 120-150 quality jobs in the area. Staff continue to work on the project and with Florida Commerce to secure every appropriate opportunity for Levy County.