

Guaranteeing Agriculture's Progress

WACC Committee Meeting
Florida Farm Bureau
January 25, 2011

Executive Summary

Background

The Florida Farm Bureau Federation (FFBF) is in the process of developing a new communications campaign entitled, "Strong Family Farms: Strengthening Communities. Creating Jobs. Growing the Economy." The goals of this new campaign, as identified by FFBF staff, include:

Goal #1: To help the county Farm Bureaus strengthen partnerships within their communities to foster economic development.

Goal #2: To work with state and local agencies/organizations to create a climate for economic growth.

Goal #3: To increase awareness of agriculture's role in Florida's economy.

To create a foundation for this campaign, FFBF staff desired to gather the opinions of the members of Florida Farm Bureau Federation's Advisory Committees in reference to the strength of and economic development in their communities. The staff then identified four objectives, or desirables, they wanted to see as an outcome of gathering members' opinions. These included:

1. Identify short-term road blocks to economic development.
2. Identify long-term barriers or incentives that can make agriculture more sustainable and strengthen communities.
3. What other services, industries, markets, etc. do our members need or desire in their communities.
4. What tools will they need to accomplish the above mentioned goals?

Upon meeting with Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) staff, it was decided to use a two-part strategy to collect information. First, an electronic survey would be created, and an anonymous survey link would e-mailed to those advisory committee members who had valid e-mail addresses. The survey would collect information in reference to members' perceptions of a strong community, factors that make up a strong community, factors that affect the economic development of a community, and barriers to the economic development of a community. The results of the survey would then be collected and analyzed to set the foundation for the one and one-half hour session to be facilitated by PIE Center staff during FFBF's Winter Advisory Committee Council meeting held in Gainesville on January 25, 2011.

The following pages reflect the results of the electronic survey, as well as the facilitated session.

Pre-Session Survey Results

In preparation for the facilitated session, an electronic survey was e-mailed to all advisory committee members with valid e-mail addresses. The following is a summary of data collected from the 115 participants' electronic responses that opted to complete the survey. Demographics of respondents are reported first, followed by responses to content-specific questions.

Which of the following Florida Farm Bureau Federation Advisory Committees do you currently serve on? Please check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Apiculture	9	10%
2	Aquaculture	2	2%
3	Beef	6	7%
4	Citrus	6	7%
5	Dairy	4	4%
6	Environmental Horticulture	7	8%
7	Equine	7	8%
8	Forestry	10	11%
9	Labor	6	7%
10	Peanut/Cotton	4	4%
11	Sod	5	6%
12	Sugar	5	6%
13	Tax	5	6%
14	Vegetable	4	4%
15	Water/Natural Resources	12	13%

Which county do you live in? Please select from the dropdown box.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Alachua	7	8%
2	Baker	2	2%
3	Bay	1	1%
4	Bradford	0	0%
5	Brevard	1	1%
6	Broward	3	3%
7	Calhoun	0	0%
8	Charlotte	0	0%
9	Citrus	0	0%
10	Clay	0	0%
11	Collier	2	2%
12	Columbia	1	1%
13	DeSoto	1	1%
14	Dixie	0	0%
15	Duval	1	1%
16	Escambia	3	3%
17	Flagler	2	2%
18	Franklin	0	0%
19	Gadsden	2	2%
20	Gilchrist	0	0%
21	Glades	2	2%
22	Gulf	0	0%
23	Hamilton	1	1%
24	Hardee	4	4%
25	Hendry	0	0%
26	Hernando	0	0%
27	Highlands	8	9%
28	Hillsborough	2	2%
29	Holmes	1	1%
30	Indian River	1	1%
31	Jackson	1	1%
32	Jefferson	3	3%
33	Lafayette	1	1%
34	Lake	3	3%
35	Lee	1	1%
36	Leon	2	2%

37	Levy		1	1%
38	Liberty		0	0%
39	Madison		3	3%
40	Manatee		4	4%
41	Marion		2	2%
42	Martin		0	0%
43	Miami-Dade		1	1%
44	Monroe		0	0%
45	Nassau		1	1%
46	Okaloosa		1	1%
47	Okeechobee		0	0%
48	Orange		4	4%
49	Osceola		0	0%
50	Palm Beach		6	7%
51	Pasco		0	0%
52	Pinellas		0	0%
53	Polk		1	1%
54	Putnam		1	1%
55	St. Johns		0	0%
56	St. Lucie		4	4%
57	Santa Rosa		1	1%
58	Sarasota		0	0%
59	Seminole		1	1%
60	Sumter		1	1%
61	Suwannee		2	2%
62	Taylor		0	0%
63	Union		0	0%
64	Volusia		0	0%
65	Wakulla		0	0%
66	Walton		0	0%
67	Washington		1	1%
	Total		91	100%

What is your gender?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Male	83	90%
2	Female	9	10%
	Total	92	100%

What is your age?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	18 - 25 years	0	0%
2	26-35 years	11	12%
3	36-45 years	12	13%
4	46-55 years	27	29%
5	56-65 years	29	32%
6	66 years and over	13	14%
	Total	92	100%

What is the highest level of education you have received?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	High School Diploma/GED	10	11%
2	Some college	14	15%
3	Associate's Degree	13	14%
4	Bachelor's Degree	34	36%
5	Master's Degree	13	14%
6	Doctoral degree	8	9%
7	Post-doc	2	2%
	Total	94	100%

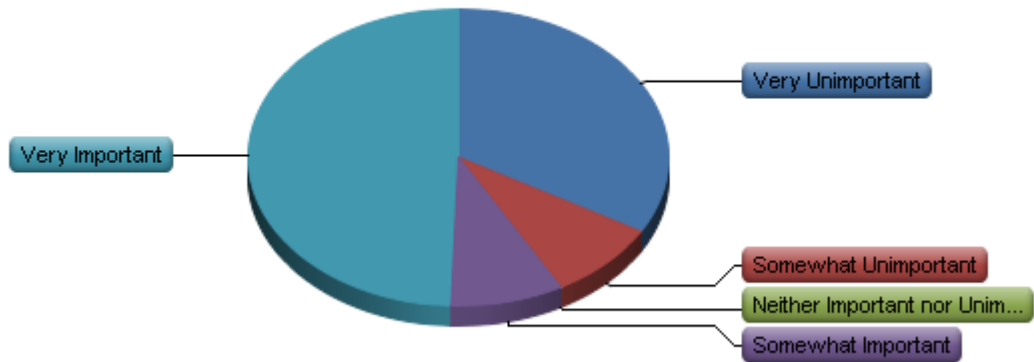
In two sentences or less, what is your definition of the term “strong community?”

Top 6 answers:

1. Works together for the benefit of all (unity)
2. Shared goals and values
3. Sustainable economy
 - a. Employment opportunities
 - b. Diverse businesses and business opportunity
4. Education (both educated citizens and a strong educational system)

5. Civic engagement (involvement of citizens)
6. Strong leadership

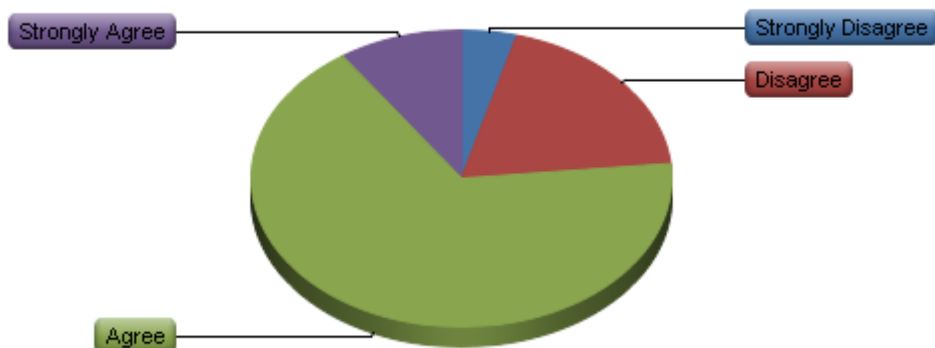
How important do you think it is to strengthen your community?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Unimportant	31	33%
2	Somewhat Unimportant	8	9%
3	Neither Important nor Unimportant	0	0%
4	Somewhat Important	8	9%
5	Very Important	46	49%
	Total	93	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	3.32
Variance	3.42
Standard Deviation	1.85
Total Responses	93

Please select whether you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree with the following statement: I consider myself to live in a strong community.



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree	4	4%
2	Disagree	18	19%
3	Agree	63	67%
4	Strongly Agree	9	10%
	Total	94	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.82
Variance	0.43
Standard Deviation	0.66
Total Responses	94

Please list a maximum of five characteristics of your community that you feel helps to make it a strong community.

Top 6 answers:

1. History of people always coming together
2. Common values and beliefs

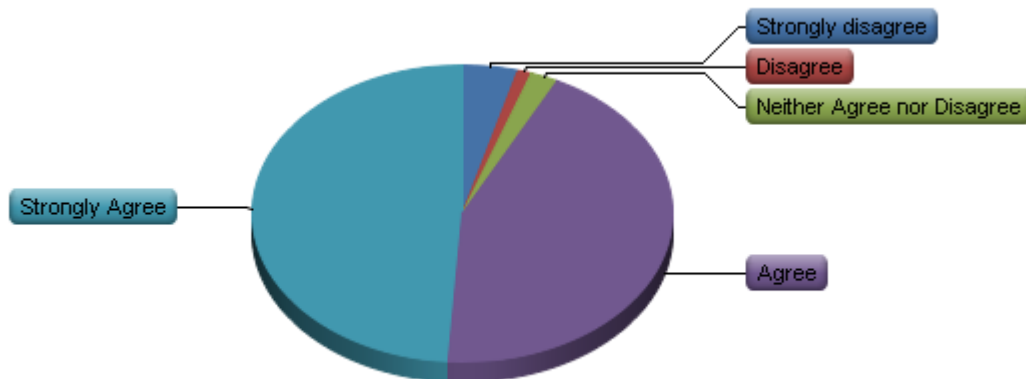
3. High quality school system with community involvement in school
4. Strong leadership
5. Agriculture
6. Healthcare and emergency response services

Please list a maximum of five characteristics that you think can improve the strength of your community.

Top 4 answers:

1. Stronger school system
2. Employment opportunities (new businesses)
3. Strong leaders who work together
4. Citizen involvement (including church)

Please select whether you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree with the following statement: Economic development plays a role in the strength of a community.



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Strongly disagree	4	4%
2	Disagree	1	1%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	2%
4	Agree	41	44%
5	Strongly Agree	46	49%
	Total	94	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	4.32
Variance	0.84
Standard Deviation	0.92
Total Responses	94

Of the following factors that could possibly contribute to economic development, please indicate each factor's level of importance using the scale below.

#	Question	Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Responses	Mean
1	Infrastructure	10	3	0	32	47	92	4.12
2	New local businesses	7	4	4	28	47	90	4.16
3	New national or regional businesses	5	3	17	48	17	90	3.77
4	Healthcare options	3	5	13	44	27	92	3.95
5	Public works (examples: prisons, post offices, etc.)	3	11	23	38	14	89	3.55
6	Transportation infrastructure	7	3	12	32	37	91	3.98
7	Quality school systems	8	2	0	14	68	92	4.43
8	Business diversity	5	6	12	33	36	92	3.97
9	Water supply and availability	8	3	3	25	53	92	4.22
10	Telecommunications (examples: high speed internet access, cable, etc.)	6	6	9	32	39	92	4.00
11	Local farmers markets	6	8	24	31	21	90	3.59
12	Parks and recreation	4	11	19	41	17	92	3.61
13	Tourism (including agri-tourism and eco-tourism)	5	5	24	39	19	92	3.67
14	Agricultural operations	5	3	7	36	41	92	4.14
15	UF/IFAS Extension services	5	4	9	32	42	92	4.11
16	Agricultural research	6	4	6	37	39	92	4.08
17	Civic organizations	4	7	14	39	28	92	3.87
18	Natural resources	5	5	5	38	39	92	4.10
19	Emergency services	7	4	4	39	38	92	4.05
20	Housing & land development	6	9	8	40	27	90	3.81
21	Federal governance	9	16	36	20	11	92	3.09
22	State governance	5	19	27	28	13	92	3.27

23	Local governance	5	12	8	34	32	91	3.84
24	New market opportunities (examples: renewable energy crops, international trade opportunities, etc.)	5	2	7	41	37	92	4.12

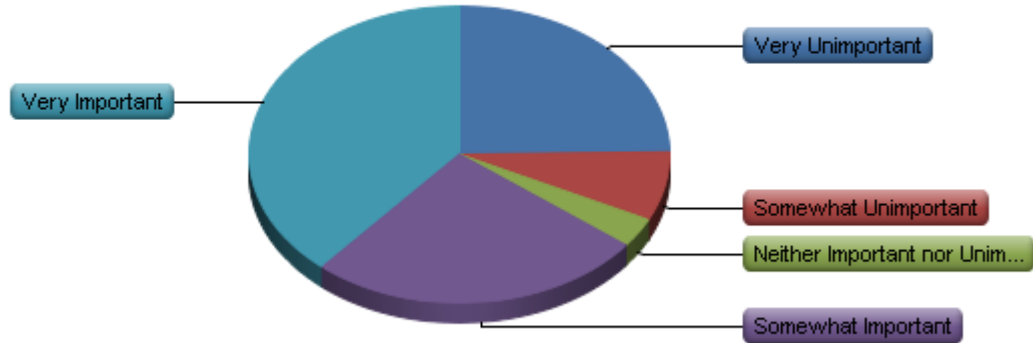
Of the 94% who agreed that economic development plays a role in the strength of the community, the top 7 factors were: (by ranking)

1. Quality school systems
2. Water supply and availability
3. New local businesses
4. Agricultural operations
5. Infrastructure
6. New market opportunities
7. UF/IFAS Extension services

Are there any other factors, not listed in the previous question, that you would consider a contribution to economic development in a community?

Text Response
Strong, educated, local leadership
Develop a cooperative environment that all the local and state governments and agencies can work together.
Sufficient diversity in local business products and a willingness to shop at home and not drive long distances to go to mega marts to "save a few pennies"
All very important
Local government that actually HELPS small business to get established by helping them navigate regulations.
Industry, societies and communications between business entities regarding the exchange of information and ideas.
Community support/acceptance of the need for growth that may also be change.
Too many unnecessary and over done government regulations, too many brother in law deals aimed at discouraging and or killing needed growth and development.
Focus on buying American products.
An incentive for private organizations to help the community rather than government programs.
Availability of jobs
Promotion of the idea that our community is made up of ALL socio-economic, age and educational levels and is all the better for it.

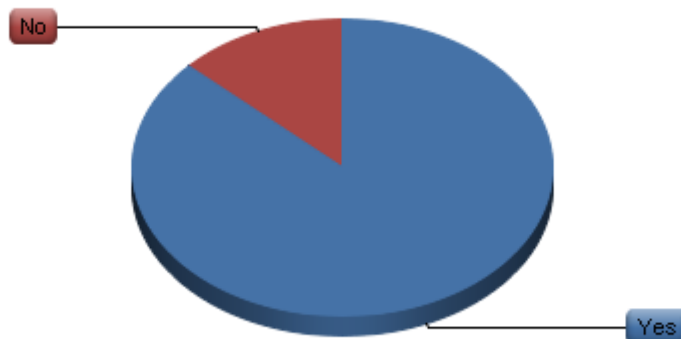
How important is it to the economic development of a community for local county Farm Bureaus to partner with chambers of commerce, economic development councils, and other similar entities?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Unimportant	23	25%
2	Somewhat Unimportant	7	8%
3	Neither Important nor Unimportant	3	3%
4	Somewhat Important	24	26%
5	Very Important	36	39%
	Total	93	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	3.46
Variance	2.69
Standard Deviation	1.64
Total Responses	93

Are there currently, or has there been, barriers to economic development in your community?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	80	87%
2	No	12	13%
	Total	92	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.13
Variance	0.11
Standard Deviation	0.34
Total Responses	92

Please list a maximum of five barriers that you think currently hinders or previously hindered economic development in your community. Please be as specific as possible. For example, if you think a barrier is regulation, then state the specific type of regulation, such as "the process of obtaining building permits in my county."

From the 87% that stated there are currently or has been barriers to economic development in their community, the top 5 answers were:

1. Regulation and permitting (for existing, new, and small businesses)
2. Infrastructure
3. Poor K-12 education/school systems
4. Opposing views amongst leadership and opposing views amongst citizens
5. Qualified workforce with employment opportunities

Facilitated Session Results

PERSONAL REFLECTION SUMMARY

Question 1. How do I currently contribute to my community?

- a. FFBF advisory committee members are diverse in their level of participation as well as types of participation

Question 2. How does my county Farm Bureau contribute to the strength of my community?

- a. Support of programming and listening to grassroots input

Question 3. How can my county Farm Bureau contribute more to the strength of my community?

- a. Be more involved and more visible politically and through educational programming

Question 4. What can my county Farm Bureau do differently to positively impact my community?

- a. Be more involved and more visible politically and through educational programming
- b. Civic engagement

Question 5. In what ways could Florida Farm Bureau strengthen my local community?

- a. Provide education and communication tools
 - i. General agriculture
 - ii. Economic impact of agriculture
- b. Work to decrease regulation (stay involved in Washington, D.C. and Tallahassee)
- c. Track issues at a local level before they become state issues
- d. Teach “how-to’s” of civic engagement and reward those that excel in this area

GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Question 1. Review the data above submitted by your committee. What are your initial thoughts? Are there any similarities?

1. Agriculture supports the local community, provides job opportunities, and stimulates economic development
2. Strong government leadership is needed
3. Need to support the educational system
4. Need a positive relationship with neighbors
5. Need to be active and involved in local communities
6. Need less regulation

Question 2. As a commodity group or committee, what can you do to contribute to the strength of your community? (Develop 3-5 promising practices)

1. Education of the general public, youth, and policy makers
 - a. Economic impact
 - b. General agriculture
2. Create awareness/more visibility
3. Provide jobs
4. Push local spending (buy local)
5. Support charities
6. Bridge gap with local organizations (i.e. Serve on local boards in economic development organizations)

Question 3. What tools would Florida Farm Bureau need to provide to help you strengthen your community? (List 3-5 tools needed)

1. Professional Development
 - a. Distribute a “toolkit” developed by FFBF to the county leadership to include
 - i. Communication Tools

1. Talking points on current issues in agriculture
 - a. General statistics (economic impact data)
 2. Newsletter templates
 3. Media contacts/outlets, including social media
 4. Public Service Announcements
 5. Commodity-specific areas on website
 - ii. Fundraising Tools
 1. Funding sources
 2. Successful fundraising techniques
 - iii. New Market Development Tools
 1. Renewable energy
 2. Create infrastructure programs such as auction markets, local sales, etc.
- b. Provide training to teach the county leadership how to use the toolkit and about resources included in the toolkit.
2. Educate children and youth on agricultural issues
 - a. Ag in the Classroom
 - b. 4-H/FFA
 - c. Leadership programs
 - d. Offer scholarship opportunities
 3. Cultivate partnerships with other organizations outside of the traditional agricultural organizations.
 - a. Policy makers and state agencies
 - b. County government departments
 - c. Game and Fish organizations
 - d. Elected officials
 - e. Civic organizations
 - f. Chamber of Commerce
 - g. Economic Development Councils
 4. Host and conduct President's Listening Sessions
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Concluding Remarks

Members of FFBF's advisory committees did recognize a need to strengthen their communities. They also recognized that economic development plays a role in strengthening a community. Overall, committee members see a need to become more engaged in their communities. They would like to see FFBF provide them with the tools for this engagement. These tools would allow members to educate, communicate, advocate, to facilitate the building of partnerships with non-agricultural organizations, and to create new market opportunities.