COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP AND FLORIDA’S CIVIC FUTURE:
A CONCEPT PAPER
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Stuart Langton, PhD, Senior Fellow, FCRC Consensus Center, FSU slangton@mindspring.com
Robert Jones, Director, FCRC Consensus Center, FSU rmjones@fsu.edu
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FOREWARD

The FCRC Florida Consensus Center, located at Florida State University, was established by the Florida legislature over 25 years ago to help find solutions for contentious public policy issues. Since then it has undertaken hundreds of successful projects to achieve consensus in planning and regulatory matters covering a range of topics including land use, construction and building codes, transportation, economic development, environment, water resources, energy, education, emergency management and regional visioning. The Center has also sponsored an awards program and training events to promote consensus building among public leaders.

Recently, the Center’s Leadership Council, a distinguished advisory group, urged the Center to expand and broaden the focus of these programs to address challenges related to civility, civic leadership, and collaboration in Florida. This working paper does so in the context of examining the state of Florida’s civic culture. It then proposes a project for the Center to undertake in partnership with others to strengthen civic capacity and collaborative governance in Florida communities. This paper has greatly benefited from the input and insights of individuals representing a range of organizations. To date, in addition to the Leadership Council, this has included: the FSU Rueben O’D. Askew School of Public Administration and Policy, Leadership Florida, Florida League of Cities, the National League of Cities, the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida Chamber Foundation, the AARP Florida, the Federal Reserve and the World Bank among others. We are continuing outreach conversations to refine the concept.

This paper provides a conceptual foundation for the project that will be conducted in collaboration with partner organizations at Florida State University, other universities, and statewide and local associations, agencies, businesses and governments. The paper is intended as a guide for discussions with potential partners and with the Center’s Leadership Council. In the near future, the Center will identify project partners and more detail about project plans.

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3 See, http://consensus.fsu.edu/leadership_council/index.html
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"To go fast, go alone. To go far, go together." - African Proverb

Florida ranks near last among states when it comes to civic health according to recent studies. What we mean by civic health are things like voting, volunteering, helping neighbors, philanthropy, attending public meetings, information sharing, participation in community organizations, and community problem-solving. The major reasons for Florida’s weak civic culture are hyper-growth and an unusual diversity mix. Florida has grown more than twice as fast than any other state in the last 60 years, and the Sunshine state has a population that is the nation’s most diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, the elderly, part-time residents, and immigrants from other states and nations. Consequently, there are a lot of differences among Floridians and a shortage of institutions, traditions, and practices that bring people together.

Florida is the third largest economy in the United States, and business leaders have promoted Florida as an innovation capitol and a “destination for business and industry.” We support such vision and would add that environmental quality, be it the physical or civic environment, are critical in attracting businesses and creative workers to Florida. So, we think of civic improvement as an economic development priority as well as a quality of life issue.

Getting people to work together and decide on shared solutions will remain the most difficult leadership challenge in Florida and its communities. Community collaboration, collaborative governance and collaborative leadership are interrelated elements needed for successful collaborative solutions that can improve Florida’s civic health. Effective community collaborations are required to expand the scope and effectiveness of civic improvement statewide and among the 477 general-purpose local governments in Florida. Entrepreneurial creativity and innovation are needed to infuse and inform collaborative approaches to governance that can build economic and social capital.
Strengthening effectiveness through successful collaboration among the public, private and nonprofit sectors and citizens can address the complex societal problems we face and find shared solutions.

We suggest several strategies for improving civic life in Florida communities. First, over the long-term, civic education among K-12 students will be essential along with civic engagement among college students in training a new generation of Florida leaders capable of collaboration. Second, near-term efforts and actions are needed to help Florida communities improve their citizen engagement and get people and institutions to work together to address pressing challenges such as enhancing economic opportunity and prosperity and collaboratively planning for the future. To do these things, community leaders and public officials will need tools in order to do a much better job of fostering collaboration and citizen engagement.

The civic paradox of Florida is that while civic health ratings are poor, there are many examples of successful civic practice and innovation, albeit, poorly documented and shared. Also, there is a vibrant but emerging network of public officials, citizen leaders, and scholars devoted to civic improvement. We propose a project to engage these leaders and the communities they serve that will:
1. Recognize and share best practices showcasing outstanding civic models through a statewide awards program that will result in documenting and providing research based information about replicating the best civic innovations in Florida’s communities;

2. Encourage and facilitate collaboration on civic improvement through demonstration projects in the context of economic development, millennials and senior civic engagement, civic stewardship and entrepreneurship, etc.;

3. Help current and emerging leaders become more proficient in convening, promoting and supporting collaborative action addressing key community challenges.

We intend to help establish and coordinate working networks of universities, foundations, leadership groups, statewide associations, corporations and others to develop practical knowledge and tools to encourage civic improvements in Florida communities soon and for years to come.

This project is conceived as a multi-year partnership initiative that will proceed in carefully designed stages. The initial stage will balance planning with action and will take approximately 12-18 months, will include such activities as:
• Establishing agreements with and among partners and organizing councils to oversee, coordinate, conduct and evaluate work;
• Identifying priority areas for a shared research and learning agenda supported by an environmental scan of successful programs and practices in Florida and beyond;
• Identifying, developing and seeking support for civic engagement demonstration efforts in communities;
• Establishing plans, protocols, and products for the awards program and determining the best dissemination platforms, partners, events, and strategies;

**ORGANIZATION FEATURE**

*Working Through Networks*

*Each Network to have a Lead Agency & Manager*

- **Scouting Network**
  Searching Out, Selecting & Recognizing Examples of Best Practices & Innovations

- **R & D Network**

- **Distribution Network**
  Information Sharing & Skill Building Through Established Organizations

Our vision is to make Florida’s civic vitality commensurate with its economic strength. So, we envision Florida as a future leader in civic performance rather than a laggard. We view Florida as a great laboratory for civic innovation and collaborative action as a core ingredient for becoming a great super-state in the 21st century.
This paper has greatly benefited from the input and insights of individuals representing a range of organizations who may also serve as participating partners. We are continuing outreach conversations with individuals and organizations to refine the concept and prepare a proposal.
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ASSESSING FLORIDA’S CIVIC HEALTH

There are many wonderful things about Florida, but its political and civic life is not the first to come to mind. While accommodating the largest number of tourists in the world, Floridians hardly set the gold standard in accommodating each other. As author Carl Hiaasen puts it, “Floridians are so divided that they cannot even agree on the design of their license plate.” This division was dramatically demonstrated in Florida’s election of 2000 and, more recently, in the divided public reaction to the tragic Trayvon Martin case. It is likely to continue given the narrow gap in political party affiliation, and the divergent opinions of Floridians about their future. As a recent poll showed, 39 percent of people think the state is moving in the wrong direction, while 36% think it is going in the right direction.

The divisions among Floridians are also reflected in the state’s weak civic culture, well documented in recent studies. A 2008 study found that among the 50 states, Florida was 32nd in voter turnout, 40th in citizens helping neighbors, 44th in philanthropy and 47th in volunteering and

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4 The Florida Division of Elections reports that in April 2013, state party registration was 40% Democrat and 35% Republican. This is the closest gap among the largest U.S. states: http://election.dos.state.fl.us/nvra/affiliation.asp
5 Florida Chamber Poll: “More Floridians Think State is Moving in the Right Direction,” Florida Chamber of Commerce, March 20, 2013 at www.flchamber.com
attending public meetings. No wonder the study concluded that Florida’s civic health is among the worst in the nation.6

A 2009 study of civic health in America’s 50 largest cities ranked Miami last, Orlando 48th, and Jacksonville and Tampa tied at 47th. “The weakness of Florida’s civic health derives from the weakness of the civic culture in its communities,” it said. A follow-up study of civic health in 2011 looked at Millennials (those aged 18 to 29) and found: “… [They] have the depressing distinction of being the most disengaged group in one of the most civically disengaged states…The implications of this for the Sunshine State are enormous, given that in years to come they will be the largest single voting cohort in the nation.”8

What accounts for Florida’s poor civic health? Former Gov. Bob Graham, a great advocate for civic improvement, emphasizes the importance of understanding the impacts of growth and diversity. In commenting on a comparative study between Miami and Minneapolis-St. Paul, the highest rated urban area for civic life, he points to underlying factors. “While Miami’s unique demographics do not fully explain its low level of engagement, the combination of rapid growth and extraordinary diversity define a social, political, and economic context within which citizens and community leaders must find a way to create a culture of engagement.”9 While focused on Miami, this insight has applicability for Florida as a whole.

THE PARADOX OF FLORIDA’S DIVERSITY

No state is as old, multicultural, multiracial, migratory, transitory or foreign-born as Florida. Look at the numbers: 17.3% of Floridians are 65 and over, (the highest rate in the land), 22.9% are of Hispanic descent, and 16.5% are African-American.10 Only 35.5% of Floridians are native born, the second lowest among states. 19.1% are foreign born, and nearly five million live in homes where a language other than English is spoken.11 Florida’s migration patterns indicate how few people have roots in Florida. Between July 2011 and July 2012 there were 212,207 births in Florida and 177,951 deaths for a net gain of 34,126 people. At the same time 200,797 people migrated to Florida, of which 49% were from another country and 51% from another state.12

Florida’s extraordinary diversity is at once one of the state’s most attractive features and its most profound civic challenge. The varieties of people from different backgrounds enrich the cultural and intellectual life of Florida communities and encourage the values of appreciation,

6 Florida Civic Health Index 2008, Beyond the Vote, Florida Joint Center on Citizenship
7 Florida Civic Health Index 2009, Communities and the State’s Civic Destiny, Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, a partnership between the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government, University of Central Florida, and the Bob Graham Center for Public Service, University of Florida
8 Florida Civic Health Index 2010, The Next Generation, Florida Joint Center on Citizenship
10 United States Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts, Florida 2012
11 United States Census Bureau, Selected Social Characteristics in the United States, American Communities Survey, 2011, one year estimates
respect, and tolerance. However, these positive features of diversity are slow to bloom in communities of high growth because they seldom have adequate civic institutions, traditions, and practices to support meaningful assimilation and inclusion. In many Florida communities this challenge is compounded by a continuous wave of new residents, many whom have limited, transient, or ambivalent Florida connections and are disinterested or slow to become engaged in the community.

We think that Florida’s diversity is and can continue to be a positive force as long as there are adequate connections and common ground among citizens. As former Gov. Jeb Bush said: “Florida is a place of unparalleled diversity of background, experiences, and vision. It makes our culture unique, but it can also make it difficult to define a common identity and create a sense of community beyond our neighborhoods to all corners of our state.” So, Florida’s civic challenge is to discover ways to better connect and draw upon the rich diversity among Floridians. This will require civic entrepreneurship in building institutions that help people to work, play, and decide together. It also calls for public officials who think and act in inclusive ways and can collaborate with each other and community leaders to resolve conflicts and achieve results.

THE LEGACY OF RAPID GROWTH

No state has grown faster. Between 1950 and 2000, Florida’s population increased by 470% compared to a national growth rate of 87%. By comparison, California, the second fastest growing state, increased its population by 220%. By comparison, California, the second fastest growing state, increased its population by 220%.13 Between 1980 and 2000 Florida grew at a rate of 64% while California grew by 43% and Texas by 45%.14 Then in the first decade of the 21st century, Florida’s population increased by 17.6% compared to the national rate of 9.7%.15

Florida’s hyper-growth during the past five decades has many civic consequences, not the least of which is insufficient and underdeveloped civic and government institutions. Not surprisingly, Florida ranks 48th in the number of nonprofit organizations per capita.16 This is a serious problem for Florida communities because these organizations are the building blocks of civic life. Their role is critical in civic development because they are, along with family and school, key sources for nurturing civic values, interests, knowledge and skills. A shortage of nonprofit groups inevitably means there is a shortage of civic engagement.

In the 25 years from 1987 to 2012, government units in Florida grew from 966 to 1,555.17 Many of these new governments have limited experience, tradition, and skill in engaging with the

13 http://www.demographia.com/db-state1900.htm
16 National Center for Charitable Statistics, Number of Registered Non-Profits by State, 2008
17 During this period 23 new municipalities were created. The vast majority of the other new local government units were special districts (e.g. Community Development Districts etc.). These special districts also cover aviation, juvenile welfare, housing, fire control and prevention, research and development, security, beach preservation, water management, and transportation. Special Districts are the most numerous and diverse group of local governments in Florida
public, crafting consensus, managing conflicts, building trust, and getting people and institutions to work together to find solutions.

Rapid growth generates a surfeit of unresolved or poorly addressed public policy issues at all levels of government in Florida. In part, this may be the result of partisan gridlock, inadequate amounts of time devoted by legislative bodies to resolve highly contentious and complex issues, or poor and unproductive legislative practice. Consequently, as former Florida Lieutenant Governor Buddy MacKay points out, Florida’s political leaders, “never succeeded in balancing environmental protection with the desire to stimulate growth and economic development. It is all the more fascinating because no one yet knows how it will end.”

The inability of Florida leaders to find lasting solutions for many of Florida’s deepest problems has led to considerable distrust of them. As one 2011 poll found, “62% of Floridians trust their elected officials less today than five years ago.” Another poll showed that, “71% of Floridians think that local government leaders do what is right for the state only “some of the time” or “never.”” The poll indicated similar negative ratings for state and federal officials and community business leaders.

These growth-related woes will only get worse. Florida will grow by another 4,803,455 to about 23 million citizens by 2030, a 25% increase. This projected growth will be particularly challenging since the Florida legislature closed the Department of Community Affairs in 2011, minimized the state’s oversight functions, and moved its overall planning functions to a new Department of Economic Development. This has returned primary responsibility for most growth management and planning decisions to local government. The question is, how equipped are Florida communities to deal with this change?

**Bright Spots in Improving Florida’s Civic Health**

What can be done to improve the civic health of Florida? A good start is acknowledging progress in three key areas: building community civic capacity, providing statewide support for civic improvement; and promoting collaborative leadership.

The bulk of civic practice takes place at the community level, so we very much embrace the conclusion of the Florida Civic Health Index 2009 study that, “communities play a critical role in the development and implementation of strategies to address shortcomings in Florida’s civic health.” A three-year Gallup and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation study, “Soul of the Community,”

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analyzed data from 26 U.S. cities, including four Florida cities, found that three main qualities attach people to place: social offerings, such as entertainment venues and places to meet, openness (how welcoming a place is) and the area’s aesthetics (its physical beauty and green spaces). Surprisingly, social offerings, openness and beauty are far more important than peoples’ perceptions of the economy, jobs or basic services in creating a lasting emotional bond between people and their community. In addition, the study suggested that peoples’ love and passion for their community might also be a leading indicator for local economic growth.

The work of the National Civic League (founded as the National Municipal League in 1894) has demonstrated, in its All-America City Awards program, that communities can improve their civic capacity particularly in such areas as innovation, inclusiveness, civic engagement and entrepreneurship, and cross-sector collaboration (priority areas for award winners). In fact, in the ten year period 2004 - 2013, seven Florida communities have been All-America City winners, and Delray Beach won the award twice, in 1993 and 2001.

We know from the All-America Cities program, and many other sources, that there is innovation, growth, and excellence in civic practice in Florida. Florida is rich with community innovation initiatives such as:

- Sarasota County’s SCOPE program that informs and engages citizens in dealing with a wide range of community challenges (http://www.scopexcel.org/)
- The 3D Project sponsored by the Southwest Florida Community Foundation that utilizes a collaborative network to allow communities and organizations to create efficiencies, share resources, and make shared decisions to strengthen civic engagement and economic development in the region. (http://www.floridacommunity.com/the-3d-initiative)
- The Tallahassee Village Square project, supported by the Knight Foundation and the Community Foundation of North Florida, that encourages civil discourse among citizens and harnesses new technologies to broaden the range of people who engage in civic dialogue. (http://tothevillagesquare.org/, http://www.tallahasseewiki.org/)
- Leon County’s Citizen Engagement Series, launched in 2011, is an innovative part of its LEADS program ((L)istening for changing needs, (E)ngages citizens and employees, (A)ligns key strategic processes, (D)elivers results and relevance, and (S)trives for continuous improvement) to work towards the Board’s strategic priorities and to optimize resources.

This included Bradenton, Miami, Palm Beach and Tallahassee. The ranking based on the three year average had Tallahassee ranked number one of 26 cities (2.080), Bradenton sixteenth (1.967), Palm Beach seventeenth (1.957) and Miami twenty sixth (1.837). http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/

These three things reliably rated highest among 10 drivers of resident attachment, which also included: civic involvement, social capital, education, perception of the local economy, leadership, safety, emotional well being and basic services. The 26 cities in the survey with the highest levels of resident love and passion for their community, or resident attachment, also had the highest rates of GDP growth over time.

This effort has received two national awards by the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the City-County Communication & Marketing Association.  

The challenge is to expand the scope of civic innovations like these among the 410 municipalities, and 67 counties, and other units of government in Florida. To do this will require increased knowledge about successful civic development initiatives and greater effort to encourage civic improvement than exists at present.  

Some matters of civic importance transcend local control and call for statewide attention and collaboration. Take education policy. It is well known that there is a high correlation between civic engagement and educational attainment. Therefore, improving the quality of education is an important consideration in strengthening civic health, and assuring that Florida students have adequate programs of civic education should be a priority. It is promising that the Florida legislature passed unanimously the Sandra Day O’Connor Civic Education Act in 2010 to improve civic education across Florida’s 67 public school districts. The Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, a partnership between the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida and the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida, provided strong support for this bill and continue to assist in implementing, monitoring and reporting on its progress. Going forward it is important to encourage support in the implementation of this long-needed legislation.  

Support from the business community is also important in improving community civic health since community solutions increasingly require cross sector partnerships between government, business, and the nonprofit sector. Corporate leaders can also encourage thinking beyond a one-dimensional approach to economic development in Florida by appreciating that quality of life issues such as civic health and environmental protection are important considerations in retaining and attracting residents, businesses, and talented workers. Florida is fortunate to have a state chamber of commerce that appreciates the connection between civic and economic development. The 20-year strategic plan of the Florida Chamber includes “Civic and Governance Systems” among its six priorities, and it adopts an objective: “To create a culture of informed participation and engagement.”  

The philanthropic community is also an important player in building civic capacity in Florida. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the largest foundation in the state, since 1950

25 The Lou Frey Institute at the University of Florida provides information about the Sandra Day O’Connor Civic Education Act and its implementation. The Florida League of Cities is working with the two centers to create the “Cities in the Classroom” curricula to help students learn about local government http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/Assets/Files/CitiesintheClassroomInitiativePromotingGoodCivicHealth.pdf  

has provided more than $841 million in grants through its Engaged Communities program to help sustain healthy communities. It has supported innovative approaches to community engagement nationwide by addressing community information needs and using technology, and in focusing on youth leadership, social entrepreneurs and local institutions. The Foundation also sponsored a three year research project with Gallup called "Soul of the Community" that emphasizes the importance of social offerings, aesthetics, openness to people, and education as "drivers" of citizen satisfaction with their community.\(^{27}\)

Florida’s 25 community foundations hold more than $1.54 billion in charitable assets and give $115 million each year to support nonprofit groups across the state. In a 2012 survey report, the Florida Philanthropic Network suggests Florida grant makers will focus more on public policy and collaboration in the coming years.

Florida is not without considerable experience in leadership development. The organization Leadership Florida has been pioneers in helping leaders from all sectors develop skills to work together in improving their communities and the state. There are also over 40 community leadership programs in Florida (many sponsored by local chambers of commerce) and there are scores of association leadership awards programs that honor individuals and institutions and which highlight promising leadership lessons and models.

Two influential professional associations have tried to address the corrosive growth in disrespect and incivility in Florida public life. The Florida League of Cities, and a number of municipalities, have adopted “civility” accords and codes to encourage respectful behavior in public meetings.\(^{28}\) The Florida Supreme Court, and many local bar associations, have also altered their admission policies to include a provision for Attorneys to “uphold civility.”\(^{29}\)

**ADVANCING COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE**

The recent progress to strengthen Florida’s civic infrastructure reported above is encouraging and provides a meaningful foundation for the next generation of effort. That effort, we propose, should include a strong emphasis on community civic innovation, more robust efforts by government to engage citizens, and the cultivation of collaborative leadership to make these things possible. Without a substantial focus on these needs, we fear progress in civic improvement may stagnate or fall behind the civic challenges that will accompany Florida’s next wave of growth. To

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\(^{27}\) This study conducted between 2008-2010 included four Florida “Knight” cities: Bradenton, Miami, Palm Beach and Tallahassee. The ranking among the 26 cities was based on a three-year average that measured citizen “attachment.” Tallahassee placed first among the 26 cities with a rating of 2.080. Bradenton was ranked sixteenth with a rating of 1.967, Palm Beach seventeenth with a rating of 1.957 and Miami twenty-sixth with a rating of 1.837. See, [http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/](http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/)


\(^{29}\) Jan Podlow, “Revised Admission Oath New Emphasizes Civility.” *Florida Bar News*, October 1, 2011
stay on course, and increase momentum for civic improvement, we recommend an approach as follows.

The report that compared the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the nation’s highest in civic health among the 50 largest cities, with Miami, the lowest, observed: “Minneapolis-St Paul civil servants, public officials, and citizens have traditions and policies of collaboration that enhance satisfaction with public institutions, leaders, and other citizens, and maintain a spirit of creativity and inclusion.”

This statement is particularly helpful in identifying the importance of collaboration, supported by values of inclusion and creativity, as central to the improvement of civic health. In thinking about how Florida communities can prove their ability to deal with the forces of growth and diversity, it is clear that leaders will need to be able to promote and facilitate collaboration in order to address difficult community challenges. So, developing knowledge about successful collaborative practices, and helping leaders develop the skills to implement them, is critical to improving Florida’s civic health.

Florida communities face a unique dilemma in that they have low measures of civic health in a time that calls for high levels of civic performance. Many of these communities face a dual need to improve their civic infrastructure, normally a long-term proposition, while also seeking immediate solutions to pressing problems. This gives rise to a culture of civic urgency that is akin to trying to retrofit a plane in flight. This situation places a high premium on innovation in community practice and the sharing of knowledge about innovations that help resolve community problems as quickly as possible.

Collaborative approaches to these challenges deserve serious consideration given their widespread practice and support over several decades. As one author has claimed: “Collaborative strategies for addressing civic challenges produce tangible and innovative results while developing the capacity of communities and regions to meet future challenges.”

Collaboration is central to this project since working together effectively needs to be a priority given the unique diversity of Florida and the divisions among the public. Collaboration, as noted earlier, has been identified as a core factor contributing to civic health. Today, the importance of collaborative practice is widely accepted in the field of organizational development, urban planning and public administration; and political scientists acknowledge the necessity of collaboration given the polycentric nature of so many public problems.

Collaborative practice has also long been appreciated in such fields as agriculture, education, high technology manufacturing, medicine, and public health. Increasingly, the value of collaboration is being recognized in public policy areas. This is illustrated in the recent book, Collaborate or Perish, by former New York and Los Angeles Police Commissioner William Bratton, which describes how

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Collaboration can improve community law enforcement, no small issue in Florida given the state’s high crime rate.\textsuperscript{32}

Collaboration is also important in economic development, a priority policy area for Florida. For example, a recent study of economic resurgence in 25 mid-sized U.S. cities found that the common success variable was collaboration among significant stakeholders.\textsuperscript{33} Ben Bernanke, the Federal Reserve Chairman, recently addressed the 2013 Federal Reserve System Community Affairs Conference, suggesting the key to creating resilient communities is collaborative leadership. “Industry mix, demographic makeup, and geographic location made less difference to success than the presence of a community leader and collaboration around a vision for the future…The successful leader was simply the person or entity that recognized the importance of preventing further deterioration in the local economy and agreed to take responsibility for the effort to turn things around. The leader helped facilitate local collaboration, which was essential not only because economic development is complicated and multidimensional, but also for the more prosaic reason that outside funders typically require that all interested stakeholders commit to a strategic direction.”

Given the importance of economic development as a state goal in Florida, we anticipate that a number of the case studies and demonstration projects associated with this project will focus on collaboration in economic development.

Because collaboration has proven to be so successful as a strategy and practice, the project we propose will focus on three areas in which collaborative approaches can strengthen civic life in Florida. The first, community collaborations, is about initiatives outside of government that help address community problems and/or build capacity to do so in the future. For example a recent Urban Land Institute study provides examples of successful neighborhood transformation and civic engagement.\textsuperscript{34} The second area, referred to as collaborative governance, refers to ways in which government bodies and agencies engage citizens. The third area, collaborative leadership, is concerned about how the current and future generation of leaders can become competent in advancing community collaborations and collaborative government. So, collaborative leadership needs to be an area of continuing education for public leaders and of civic education for young people.

**COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS**


“Community Collaborations” is a term frequently used to refer to collaborative practices and programs at the community level. Community collaborations include activities that can improve a community by resolving conflicts, solving problems, creating new resources, building capacity, and planning for the future. As noted earlier, this project is especially interested in cases in which capacity building is central or a by-product of community collaborations given the need to strengthen civic capacity in many Florida communities.

The research and self-help literature about community collaboration is considerable and offers abundant competing definitions, distinctions, analytical typologies, suggested principles, and guiding questions. Consequently, any effort to improve community collaborations in a particular setting needs to be selective about the matters upon which it will focus. For example, emphasis might be given to certain kinds of civic behaviors, such as volunteering and philanthropy, as has been the case in regard to the studies of civic health noted earlier. Attention might be given to projects in policy areas such as education, economic development, public health, etc. Another approach is to concentrate on collaborative initiatives according to different purposes, such as service implementation information diffusion, problem solving and capacity-building, etc. An additional option is to consider collaboration according to defining characteristics such as across sectors, across organizations, mandatory or voluntary, etc.

In thinking about community collaborations and innovation, our philosophy is to address civic matters from a holistic perspective. By this we mean to consider practices such as volunteering, voting, philanthropy, participation in organization, in relation to each other and other significantly important items. So, our thinking about civic matters would consider the importance of technology and the digital age as highlighted in a recent Pew Research Center study in the Smart Cities movement, in the role of urban design and architecture in shaping civic consciousness, ideas of civic stewardship and recent advances in neuroscience, behavioral economics, and Happiness.

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36 Over the past 25 years the National Civic League has used and revised a list of preferred community behaviors and activities referred to as a “Civic Index” to evaluate and improve civic life. For a history of the Civic Index from the late 1980s to the present see: Michael McGrath and Gloria Rubio Cortes, “The New Civic Index,” National Civic Review, Summer 2012, p.3-19.


Studies research that may help us to better understand civic attitudes and behavior.

Determining the areas and priorities of focus and experiences in regard to community collaborations is an important initial strategic project task and one that will require considerable involvement by partners, stakeholders, and representatives of target audiences. This will help guide the kind of information that this project seeks to acquire, analyze, and share among different audiences.

**COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE**

Collaborative Governance has been defined as: “A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly involve non-state stakeholders from the private and non-profit sectors in a collaborative decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented and deliberative and aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs and assets.” The term “Collaborative Public Management” is used frequently in the field of Public Administration to refer to very similar practices. A classic example of successful collaborative governance in Florida was the Governor’s Commission for a Sustainable South Florida whose five-year regional consensus building milestone effort involved a 50-member group representing the diversity of South Florida’s economy and environment and concluded in 1999. It was led by Richard Pettigrew, a collaborative leader, and facilitated by the FCRC Consensus Center. It resulted in a unanimous Commission report with consensus recommendations on the regional economy, growth, energy and water resources and led Congress and the Florida Legislature to adopt the long-term Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan in 2000.

Collaborative governance reflects and builds upon earlier popular innovation areas in public life since the 1960s such as citizen participation, public-private partnerships, networking, and alternative dispute resolution. Today, the notion of collaborative governance includes all of these


43 The term “collaborative governance” and “collaborative public management” are frequently used interchangeably and they are in this paper. Some distinctions have been made about these terms. For example see: Naim Kapucu, Farhod Yuldashev, and Erlam Bakiev, “Collaborative Public Management and Collaborative Public Governance: Conceptual Differences and Similarities.” European Journal of Economic and Political Studies 2(1) 2009. We agree with the authors that “collaborative governance” may have broader meaning, but believe this is so because the literature is more grounded in issues of political theory than public administration. This is evident for example, in the annotated bibliographic footnotes in the first chapter of the recent book, Collaborative Governance: Private Rules for Public Goals in Turbulent Times by John Donahue and Richard Zeckerhouser, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, and in the notes to the first chapter of Carmen Sirianni’s work Investing in Democracy: Engaging Citizens in Collaborative Governance. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2009.

44 See “Collaborative Governance: A Guide for Grantmakers, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation supported the theory and practice of collaborative problem solving and consensus building across sectors in the 1980’s and 1990’s, including deliberation and dialogue, collaborations between government and organizations, and public dispute resolution processes. These efforts have been part of an emerging movement across America toward collaborative governance which actively engages citizens through the tools of dialogue and deliberation, community problem solving, and multi-
things and many other approaches that seek to make government more inclusive, transparent, effective and productive by depending more upon citizens and the private and nonprofit sectors. The difference between community collaborations and collaborative governance has to do with the footprint of government. In the former case, the touch of government is most often light and overshadowed by the influence of corporate and non-profit leadership. In cases of collaborative governance, government’s tread is heavy in shaping and utilizing the results.

**Collaborative Leadership**

Whereas community collaborations and collaborative governance are primarily concerned about issues of strategy, principles, and design, collaborative leadership emphasizes the personal attributes and skills of leaders. As Archer and Cameron have argued, the issues of governance, operations, and behavior are equally important in achieving success in collaborative efforts. While this is a compelling reason to pay attention to this issue, it is all the more important given the need to increase non-profit institutions and strengthen the many younger and less experienced government institutions in Florida. Strong leadership is needed for such change. However, as Herb Rubin, an experienced leader in developing collaborative leadership advises, “collaborative leaders do not necessarily (or only) lead collaborations, they lead collaboratively.”

We propose that the FCRC Consensus Center, in concert with partners, expand its modest leadership awards program as a vehicle to obtain information and increase knowledge about community collaborations, collaborative governance, and collaborative leadership practices in Florida. In addition to an annual awards program, the project will involve demonstration projects with leadership organizations, professional associations, university centers and government agencies. The awards program and demonstration projects will provide information to be used in developing case studies and other materials about community collaboration, collaborative governance and collaborative leadership. In addition, the project will disseminate information through the meetings of professional associations, training programs, and a variety of electronic platforms.

An important feature of this project will be the development of a research network among Florida universities that will be coordinated through the Reuben Askew School of Public Administration at Florida State University in collaboration with other partners at Florida State

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45 The University Network on Collaborative Governance of which the Florida Consensus Center is a founding member has developed a report that suggests five areas of Collaborative Leadership competency and 30 discrete competency areas. See, “UNCG Guide to Collaborative Competencies,” Portland, OR, Policy Consensus Institute, 2011.


University and other colleges and universities in Florida. This network will provide an opportunity for faculty and students with interest in civic and community development issues to work together on shared research interests and in building a body of knowledge of practical significance to Florida communities and public officials. To our knowledge no such effort exists in Florida or other states.

Because the research network is critical to bringing the range of information and the depth of knowledge necessary to make this project successful, the first year will include developing the network and conducting an environmental scan of all the current case studies and documents concerning best community collaborations and collaborative governance in Florida. Also, in the first year, a system will be created to obtain nominees and information about the awards program using the resources among universities to assure accuracy and detail in understanding and reporting about cases.

**FLORIDA AS A LABORATORY OF CIVIC OPPORTUNITY AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION**

Florida’s civic challenge is unique in that its focus is not so much on renewal, as is the case in most other states. Rather it is on creating and expanding civic capacity in communities and governments that are underdeveloped to engage the public and different sectors that are unusually diverse and transient. In this regard, Florida has an opportunity to serve as a laboratory to increase knowledge about civic development in high-growth and high conflict environments, a challenge of global significance and interest. So, this project is very interested in examples of accelerated civic growth and improvement, innovation, and entrepreneurship in collaborative practice in different sized communities, in municipal, county, and state government and across private, public and non-profit sectors.

The project can also be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the ties between academia, communities, and government. This has long been a goal of the State University System of Florida (SUS) and it has been a goal of each of the state universities in Florida. A study by the FCRC Florida Consensus Center conducted for the SUS Board of Governors in 2009 demonstrated the extensive and diverse degree of civic engagement activities undertaken by sister universities. We believe strong community engagement also takes place in state colleges and in many private colleges and universities in that the Carnegie Foundation has given national recognition to 4 private schools as well as 9 public universities in Florida for their excellence in community engagement. This project is different from most traditional community engagement activities as it provides an opportunity for faculty, undergraduate and graduate students to work with peers from other colleges and universities, along with government officials and community leaders. In this sense it creates an

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opportunity for higher education institutions to work together in addressing a critical challenge to Florida’s future.

We caution that enthusiasm for collaboration should be balanced with recognition of a number of limitations. One is that collaboration may not be a particularly wise approach in situations where hierarchical order is important, secrecy is a priority, time is of the essence, conflict is too great, or problems can be solved more easily or faster in other ways. Second, the transaction costs of collaboration are not always or necessarily more cost effective than alternative courses of action, so cost-benefit analysis is an important consideration. Third, many collaborative initiatives are designed, managed, and implemented poorly, so it is often better to avoid collaboration if it cannot be done well as it makes it all the more difficult or impossible to try again. As John Donahue and Richard Zeckhauser have suggested: “If Goldilocks were to review the evidence on collaboration … she would observe it was sometimes used too little, sometimes too much, sometimes just right, and sometimes, alas, just wrong.”

This project will help Florida leaders and communities increase their understanding of the potential and pitfalls of collaborative practice. It will prepare them to lead collaborative approaches through the development of skills in serving as collaborative leaders. We view collaboration not as an end in itself. Rather it is a process, if done well that can achieve improved civic capacity, better management and resolution of community problems, and more effective government decisions and services. This is a lot to ask for, but it also a lot worth considering given the challenges Florida faces.

ADVANCING COLLABORATIVE ACTION, LEADERSHIP AND CIVIC CAPACITY

This paper has sought to identify the areas of weakness of Florida’s civic culture, the reasons for and the implication of them, and several approaches for improvement. While acknowledging recent progress in strengthening the state’s civic infrastructure, we emphasize the need to increase knowledge about civic best practices, successful innovations, and collaborative leadership.

We offer three strategies, starting with thinking about Florida as a laboratory to learn how to achieve improvements in civic practice at an accelerated rate in order to cope with the powerful forces of growth and diversity. Second, we propose creating a network among university scholars and students to develop and disseminate knowledge about best civic practices and innovation to community leaders and public officials. Third, we recommend using a leadership awards program and research and development projects as vehicles to obtain information and demonstrate successful programs and practices. The results of this focused initiative will enhance the capacity of community leaders to collaborate for results, will increase the use of collaboration to address civic challenges and solve community problems, and create a baseline of collaborative leadership projects from which lessons can be drawn.

In discussions with potential partners and others, a number of topics have been suggested as worthy of particular focus in new research and applied research and development demonstration projects. These topics, which are illustrative of the kind of knowledge this initiative would seek to advance, are as follows:

1. Collaborative leadership and economic development.
2. Civic benchmarking and metrics
3. Promoting civility and public dialogue
4. Civic entrepreneurship
5. Collaborative models of community problem-solving
6. Strategies for accelerated community capacity-building
7. Technology, social media, and civic engagement
8. Public engagement in budgeting
9. Creating collaborative cultures in government agencies
10. Civic inclusion models for new residents
11. Civic Engagement for 55 plus residents
12. Maximizing community and university collaboration

These themes of interest to partners may provide a guide for the initial organization of the Collaborative Action and Leadership initiative.

We think that the best way to implement this project is in a highly collaborative manner and in iterative stages. While the FCRC Consensus Center will serve as coordinating manager for the project, the majority of the work will be carried out with partner institutions. It is expected that the Center will need to create one or two network councils to assure adequate direction, coordination, supervision and accountability. The initial organizational design will be developed with partners based on an assessment of their level of commitment and resources. Because of its long and successful track record in getting leaders and institutions to build consensus, the Center is uniquely equipped to lead this initiative.

This project is conceived as a multi-year initiative that will proceed in successive stages. The initial stage, which will take a year, will include such activities as: establishing agreements with and among partners; organizing councils to oversee, coordinate, and conduct work; identifying priority areas for research and learning; conducting an environmental scan of successful programs and practices in Florida; establishing plans, protocols, and products for the awards program; creating a shared research agenda; determining the best dissemination platforms, partners, events, and strategies; developing evaluation methodologies; and making plans for further project implementation and expansion.

The vision presented in this paper is bold because the civic challenges in Florida are so great. We think that such challenges should be met with a sense of urgency and a willingness to seek strong solutions that can have a lasting effect. After all, our civic infrastructure is as important as our physical infrastructure and certainly deserves more attention in Florida than it has been given. So, we consider Florida’s poor civic health ratings as a judgment about Florida’s past, but not a necessary
predictor of its future. It is all about how we think about it and are willing to act. In this regard, we imagine a future in which Florida can become a great civic innovation laboratory and a model of civic development for the 21st century.