THE FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE SUMMIT

CREATING A ROAD MAP FOR ADVANCING CIVIC LIFE IN FLORIDA

Prepared for the Florida Civic Advance Summit by the FCRC Consensus Center at Florida State University

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The Florida Civic Advance

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The Florida Civic Advance is a new multi-sector collaborative initiative launched by the FCRC Consensus Center to support and strengthen civic progress in Florida communities. Its members represent over 30 local, regional, and statewide organizations committed to achieving long-term civic improvements in all of Florida’s communities.
Executive Summary

Florida’s across-the-board low performance on civic health indicators presents a major barrier to sustaining the highly desired quality of life and the competitive edge of the state’s communities. Finding collaborative and practical solutions to that issue was the goal of the February 2015 Florida Civic Advance Summit. The Summit brought together over 100 leaders representing a collaborative network – the Florida Civic Advance – composed of 30 organizations concerned about the civic health of Florida’s communities. The Summit was the first initiative of the Florida Civic Advance, a project initiated by the FCRC Florida Consensus Center at Florida State University in collaboration with many other organizations.

The Critical State Problem Addressed

The statistics from a recent national study of civic engagement highlight the state of Florida’s civic health. Among the 50 states, Florida is 50th in working with neighbors to fix community problems, 48th in donating money to charity, 47th in attending a public meeting and belonging to a community group, and 46th in volunteering. Florida is also one of the top 10 states for low voter registration. In addition, the state’s high growth rate means that new citizens are arriving each day from other countries and across the country. At present, only 35 percent of Floridians are natives, while 65 percent come from elsewhere. Getting that new two-thirds of the state’s population involved and calling their new communities home is a pressing challenge. Finding collaborative community solutions and sustaining an ever-expanding group of organizations and individuals to champion and implement those solutions led to the 2015 Florida Civic Advance Summit and the creation of the FCA.
Shared Goals and Action Agenda

The two-day Summit days achieved its goals to establish a:

- Common knowledge base.
- Shared set of goals and broad agreement on the next steps to achieve them.
- Strong commitment to advance civic engagement in Florida.
- Greater recognition of the importance of the civic health of Florida communities to sustaining the state’s highly desirable quality of life and economic prosperity.

The Summit ended with commitments on shared goals and the next steps to achieve those goals. Participants (right) came from all parts of Florida and represented a variety of experiences and backgrounds and included a well-balanced group of interested citizens, organizations, and experts in civic health from Florida and other parts of the country.
Those conclusions resulted from key Summit features that participants reported as highly valuable:

- Multiple opportunities for open dialogue with those from diverse perspectives and areas of knowledge.
- Getting to know and learning from each other and new and proven best practices.
- Forming new connections with others committed to achieving the same end.

Participants agreed on three strategic next steps for addressing Florida’s civic health challenges:

- Develop a strategic design for how to best work together as a network and provide tangible assistance to local communities and leaders.
- Complete and implement the FCA’s organizational model that focuses on leadership development, best practices research, and community assistance.
- Provide multiple ways for partner organizations to work together formally and informally.

The Summit ended with a broad-based agreement to advance civic engagement in Florida and specific actions by many FCA organizations going forward. The FCRC Florida Consensus Center committed to seek the resources necessary to work collaboratively with others to strengthen civic life throughout the state. “Working together, we can go far,” Center Director Bob Jones concluded.
Network Members

Florida Civic Advance