

REGIONAL DATA & ANALYTICS SUMMIT

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A Collaboration Between:

Hosted by:



OVERALL FINDINGS/THEMES FROM THE SUMMIT

The following represents a listing of themes that were heard across nearly all of the targeted industry sector breakout sessions. The most critical take-away was that “Urgency is Real” given the impacts of the talent shortages are expected to be most pronounced from 2030-2035.

The following themes are organized into buckets for which we believe results can be achieved, though all must be worked on immediately:

NEAR-TERM RESULTS (NOW AND WITHIN TWO YEARS)

EARLY, EXPERIENTIAL EXPOSURE IS CRITICAL

Students and job-seekers across all levels need multiple real-world touchpoints – internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, project-based learning – to connect education with careers.

TALENT RETENTION ISN'T OPTIONAL – IT'S CRITICAL

Workforce stability depends on internal culture, leadership development, upskilling, and visible career ladders.

TALENT ATTRACTION: IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

Population growth via targeted attraction from across the U.S.A., student attraction to our higher education institutions, and immigration are critical. Providing “soft landing” supports is essential to fill gaps.

MID-TERM RESULTS (WITHIN 3-5 YEARS)

MINDSET SHIFT: FROM “JOBS” TO “JOURNEYS”

Careers should be framed as evolving pathways, not endpoints – valuing character, growth, and adaptability as important as credentials. With rapid technological change (AI, automation), cultural alignment and learning agility are more sustainable hiring criteria.

ALIGNMENT OVER ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

Programs abound – but fragmentation, lack of shared goals, and per-silo incentives reduce effectiveness. Unified coordination must be a requirement.

REMOVE THE ROADBLOCKS

Even the best workforce strategies can be derailed by unresolved structural barriers – childcare, housing, licensing, immigration, and regulatory friction.

EDUCATION-INDUSTRY POLICY REALIGNMENT

Current funding, credentialing, and procurement models are outdated; they must incentivize outcomes, alignment, and agility. Transformative progress requires deliberate partnerships across sectors, driven by aligned metrics that support employers' talent needs.

AGTECH & AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

COMMON THEMES AND ACTION ITEMS



COMMON THEMES

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCING FASTER THAN TALENT READINESS

- Rapid advancements in AI, automation, and UAS (Uncrewed Aerial Systems) are widening the skills gap.
- Field work remains difficult to scale without trained talent; in-office roles are benefiting more quickly from productivity tools.
- Smaller family farms and larger-scale operations are both feeling the strain—especially as the talent pipeline isn't growing proportionately.
- Global recruitment pressures and federal immigration rhetoric complicate hiring for specialized roles like faculty, pilots, or ag-tech developers.

GENERATIONAL MINDSETS AND RETENTION

- Employee churn is no longer always a red flag—it reflects a generational shift in how careers are viewed.
- Younger workers move quickly between roles, often prioritizing appreciation, culture, and flexibility over compensation.
- Retention strategies must now reflect values-based incentives, such as mission alignment, career development, and meaningful recognition.

TRAINING OVER EXPERIENCE: BUILDING FROM WITHIN

- Many businesses are hiring people without prior experience and focusing on building skills in-house.
- There's a strong pivot toward culture-based hiring: find the right fit, then train the skills.
- Integrating work-based learning (WBL), mentorships, and partnerships with tech schools are top priorities.
- Faculty positions and high-skill tech roles increasingly rely on international talent—though policy dynamics are adding friction.

ADAPTABILITY, NOT JUST AUTOMATION

- Success by 2030 hinges on developing adaptive thinkers—those who can reskill and “learn how to learn.”
- There's a call to change how we educate: shift from static curricula to dynamic, cross-functional teaching models.
- Career ladders must be visible and attainable—tiered education models like certificate → diploma → degree offer flexible advancement.

AGTECH & AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

COMMON THEMES CONTINUED

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

- Small and mid-sized businesses need incentives and structure to participate meaningfully in workforce development efforts.
- Alumni networks, "boomerang" strategies, and regional collaboration are seen as keys to building a sustainable talent pipeline.
- Quality of life matters—transportation, housing, and even narratives about arts and culture affect recruitment.



WHAT THE EDC IS GOING TO DO...NOW AND INTO 2026

TALENT ATTRACTION

We're putting the FM region on the map with talent attraction marketing, alumni recruitment-focused campaigns, and targeted recruitment of critical occupations.

- With our Lightning Recruitment program, the GFMEDC is helping numerous companies locate and message individuals in hard to fill occupations. Let us know how we can support your company.
- Brand marketing of the region through www.LiveInFMArea.com. We are communicating with more than 21,000 individuals who have shown an interest in the region, and those relationships continue to grow.
- We are working on a student recruitment program to support our higher education institutions and are doing this in partnership with the Chamber and the Metro College Alliance.

TALENT RETENTION

- Company Culture Program – We currently have more than a dozen companies working with us to develop a survey and networking group to support great company culture.

POLICY ADVOCACY & DATA

- The GFMEDC is assisting The Chamber with gathering and analyzing policy-driven data from our Business Retention and Expansion Surveys (with company approval). Aggregating this information means more data getting into the hands of legislators to make informed decisions on what businesses in FM need.
- With the creation of the FM Data & Analytics Team, the GFMEDC is committed to gathering and analyzing data that continues to tell the story of the FM economy. This Fall, the GFMEDC along with partners will be conducting our second annual workforce survey.



The GFMEDC encourages our industry partners and key collaborators to commit to addressing some of the key themes in this report. Let us, and those involved in this important work, know how you and your organization will drive outcome-based results to ensure the “Rising Storm” of talent challenges ahead of us are met head-on, leaving our region and states resilient to win the war on talent.

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IMPORTANT RESOURCES



THE RISING STORM



DATA PROFILES