

## **JaxUSA Partnership starts process on new strategy for economic development**

By Derek Gilliam  
February 23, 2018

The last time Northeast Florida's economic development organization came up with an regional economic development strategy, Jacksonville's unemployment rate had climbed past 9 percent.

The rate sat at 3.4 percent at the end of December, according to the most recent figure from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor statistics. The economic climate JaxUSA Partnership used to develop its regional strategy Innovate Northeast Florida has drastically changed.

"Now with full employment, we need to look at different strategies," JaxUSA President Jerry Mallot said to a group of roughly 100 economic development professionals. "That day is today."

Thursday afternoon at the World Golf Village, JaxUSA Partnership discussed Elevate Northeast Florida and began the discussion that will lead to changes on how the economic development organization promotes growth.

Two consulting organizations — Avalanche Consulting and The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning — will help develop the strategy.

Amy Holloway, president and CEO of Avalanche Consulting, had been involved in forming Innovate Northeast Florida. She said that during over the past six years, economic development strategies have changed, with many communities focusing on a holistic approach.

Previously, the field had focused largely on growth as the most important measure. Now, communities have focused on "elevating" everyone in the community. This strategy often focuses more on workforce development and improving the health of communities.

Avalanche recently helped Atlanta update its approach to economic development. One of the pillars of Atlanta's economic development strategy that was adopted in December will focus on improving people's lives. For example, one of the measures of success will be reducing homelessness, drug overdoses and increasing the number of units of affordable housing.

"Economic development can't be successful if we leave people behind," Holloway said.

Improving people's lives often leads to a more productive workforce and stable community.

However, the process is focused on community input. With Innovate Northeast Florida, a community survey received 3,000 responses. Holloway is hoping for more this time.

To fill out the survey, visit [ElevateNEFL.com](http://ElevateNEFL.com).

The development of JaxUSA Partnership's regional economic development strategy will take place over four phases, with the entire process running through September 2018.