



JUL - SEPT 2023 | 4TH QUARTER

THE QUARTERLY FOCUS

The Florida Association of Special Districts' Official Newsletter

CHECK OUT WHAT'S
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National Coalition

..and more!

4TH QUARTER RECAP

Written By FASD Staff

Has your district completed its membership renewal yet? The renewal period began October 1.

This quarter has been particularly busy as we have been preparing the association to assist both officials from special district members as well as non-members in meeting the state-mandated Ethics requirement law.

In partnership with the esteemed Florida Institute of Government, we are in the process of developing a comprehensive 4-hour online course. Beginning 2024, our objective is to provide FASD members with access to this mandatory annual course at no additional cost. Additionally, FASD will securely store your course information so that you'll have a backup if needed.

Also, FASD is introducing a completely new 2-day certification program that will concentrate on the roles and responsibilities of your district's administrative professionals. Stay tuned for further details regarding this course, as it will be rolled out in April 2024.

To ensure you are kept informed about all the upcoming developments and innovations, we invite you to download our newly launched FASD smartphone app:



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UPCOMING FASD EVENTS

2023 EVENTS

OCT 9 - 12 - CDM PROGRAM, FT. LAUDERDALE

OCT 12 - 13 - QUARTERLY MEETING, FT. LAUDERDALE

2024 EVENTS

JAN 22 - 26 - CDM PROGRAM, TALLAHASSEE

JAN 23 - 24 - LEGISLATIVE FORUM, TALLAHASSEE

APR 25 - 26 - QUARTERLY MEETING AND CDAP (CERTIFIED DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL) COURSE, SARASOTA

JUN 10 - 13 - ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ORLANDO

OCT 24 - 25 - QUARTERLY MEETING, ST. AUGUSTINE

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Written by David E. Ramba

Membership in the Florida Association of Special Districts offers numerous benefits for individuals and organizations involved in special districts in Florida. Here are some of the key advantages of being a member:



Networking Opportunities: FASD provides a platform for members to connect and collaborate with peers from various special districts across Florida. Networking events, conferences, and workshops allow members to share experiences, best practices, and ideas.

Educational Resources: FASD offers a wealth of educational resources, including webinars, workshops, and publications. These resources help members stay informed about the latest trends, regulations, and best practices in the special district world.

Advocacy and Representation: FASD serves as a strong advocate for special districts at the local, state, and national levels. Membership gives you a voice in influencing policy decisions that directly impact your district and community.

Access to Expertise: Members gain access to a network of experts and professionals who can provide guidance and assistance on a wide range of issues related to special districts, including governance, finance, and operations.

Legislative Updates: FASD keeps members informed about legislative changes and developments that affect special districts in Florida. This information helps members adapt to new regulations and compliance requirements.

Overall, membership in the Florida Association of Special Districts provides a platform for professional growth, collaboration, advocacy, and access to valuable resources that can benefit both individual members and the special districts they represent.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Written by Jim Millican

Thank you for being part of FASD! Our greatest strengths begin with our membership. With our diverse special purpose governments throughout Florida, we can bring best practices and innovation to our communities and constituency.



The Board of Directors held a meeting on August 16th and renewed our focus to continue to expand outreach and engagement, to continue to bring you more benefits as a member, and to remain laser focused on serving our membership. Your association is here to provide you with resources and training, and to advocate in Florida, as well as on the national level, on your behalf so you can better serve your organizations and communities.

I hope you will take advantage of all we have to offer, and work with us so we are able to better provide for you and your colleagues. Since we all serve in leadership roles in our organizations, please use our training and materials to help your coworkers, elected officials, and communities.

Throughout the year, our committees are busy. The Legislative Committee continues to present the “Legislative Toolbox” to ensure our members have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to help advance our legislative initiatives. We are continuing to gear up for the 2024 Legislative Session and will keep you informed if there are any issues.

The Education and Certification Committee continues to build our education programming with the addition of another educational program, to be officially announced soon. The CDM and CDO Certification Programs are as popular as ever, but please encourage your Elected Officials and staff to apply for these programs. The next CDM Program will be offered at our October Quarterly Membership Meeting in Ft. Lauderdale.

Thank you for your membership and continued support of the Florida Association of Special Districts.



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Have You Renewed Your District Membership?

Get ready to renew your membership with the Florida Association of Special Districts, starting October 1st! As a valued member, you'll continue to enjoy a wide range of exclusive benefits, networking opportunities, and access to vital resources that empower your role in managing Florida's special districts. Don't miss out on another year of professional growth and collaboration – mark your calendar for October 1st and ensure uninterrupted access to the support you need to thrive in your special district endeavors.

For help, please contact Katherine at khughes@cmc-associates.com or Rachel at rachel@fasd.com



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QUARTERLY MEETINGS



OCTOBER

The next quarterly meeting is being held October 12 - 13, 2023, in Ft. Lauderdale at the fabulous Riverside Hotel!

We have an educational-packed Thursday with the seldomly taught in-person CDO Component Public Relations. Followed by a 4-hour workshop on generational differences with your employees.

Please [click here](#) to register last minute!

LEGISLATIVE FORUM

The next CDM Program is being offered during our upcoming Legislative Forum, January 22 - 26, 2024, in Tallahassee.

Legislative Forum dates are January 23 - 24, 2024. Legislative packets will be handed out at the October Quarterly Meeting!

More information will be forthcoming.



APRIL

Our April Quarterly meeting will be held April 25 - 26, 2024, in Sarasota at the Embassy Suites.

This quarterly meeting will also debut the newest certification program we have to offer: Certified District Administrative Professionals.

This certification program will focus on day to day tasks and requirements that your district's administrative professional encounters.



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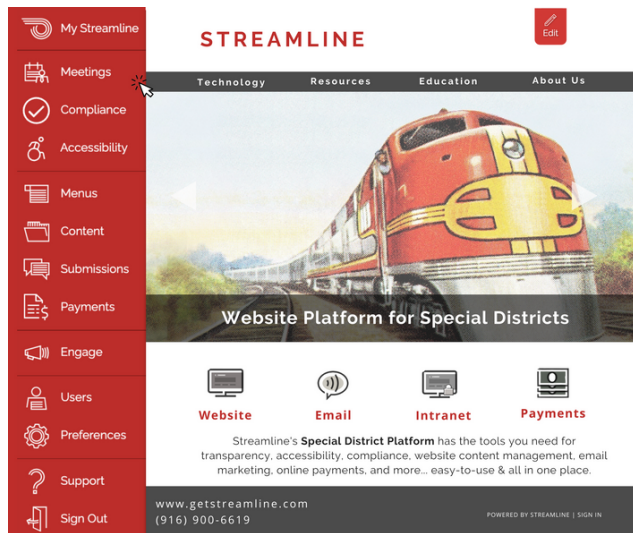
LOOKING FOR PROJECT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES?

NSDC HAS YOU COVERED.

Earlier this year, the National Special Districts Coalition (NSDC) launched a tool to streamline special district members' ability to search for project or program funding opportunities.

In partnership with The Ferguson Group (TFG), NSDC established a "project idea portal" for districts to submit projects for which funding opportunities are sought. Districts are welcome to submit details of the project via the webform, which TFG's grants team will review and work with the district to identify and apply for potential grant and finance opportunities.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE NSDC PROJECT IDEA PORTAL](#)



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This expanded authority will have a positive fiscal impact on independent special districts due to reduced costs associated with the procurement process.

In addition, public revenues will be saved due to the ability to use purchasing contracts from larger entities such as the State of Florida in regards to IT commodities and the Florida Sheriff Association’s Cooperative Purchasing Program in regards to vehicles.

This authority to “piggyback” does not apply to certain professional services (CCNA).

FASD 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES PLATFORM

The following priorities and issues were developed by the FASD Legislative Committee and approved by the FASD Board of Directors at their August 16, 2023, meeting.

— **LIABILITY:** Support efforts to expand the use of independent special district lands and water areas for outdoor recreational purposes by limiting an independent special district’s liability related to such use, similar to other protections provided to water management districts and private property owners by Florida law. There are independent special districts that allow outdoor recreational use on their properties as a benefit to the public.

However, due to increasing potential liability issues, these special districts must decide to stop allowing such use to avoid liability or to allow outdoor recreational use and risk the liability associated with such use. Districts would still be liable for any gross negligence or a deliberate, willful, or malicious injury to a person or property.

— **PIGGYBACKING:** Support efforts to expand independent special districts current authority to “piggyback” on certain local governments contracts to include contracts from the State of Florida, other political subdivisions, educational institutions, other states, nonprofit entities, purchasing cooperatives, and the federal government.

— **FINGERPRINTING:** Support efforts to authorize independent special districts to allow for FBI/FDLE fingerprinting and background checks in order to meet the requirements of the Federal Public Law 92-544.

Separate authority is necessary as the FBI has advised the FDLE that many fire districts are no longer allowed to submit applicants under s. 633.412, F.S., and should either submit under s. 125.5801, F.S. (counties authority), or s. 166.0442, F.S. (municipalities authority). Unfortunately, special districts do not have the authority to adopt ordinances under such sections.

SESSION DATES:
JAN 10 - MAR 8



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Cybersecurity: A Top Priority for Florida's Special Districts

Written by by Ryan Rupnarain, Sr. Manager, Loss Control Services - Egis Insurance & Risk Advisors

Cybersecurity incidents have been making headlines for the past several years, resulting in many organizations taking steps to increase cyber defenses and resiliency. The private sector has been quick to embrace cybersecurity controls with larger government following suit. As a result, cyber criminals have changed their tactics and have started targeting a new class of victims – local and special-purpose government.

Cyber criminals are well aware that smaller public entities often lack the resources to fully protect themselves from both known and emerging threats, whether due to a lack of IT expertise, insufficient cyber awareness, budget constraints, or all of the above. These threat actors also prey on smaller units of government that haven't yet reviewed or are unaware of this significant threat to their operations and mission of serving residents. Just because your district doesn't maintain a large amount of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) like social security numbers or collect payments directly doesn't mean it's not at risk. In addition to accessing sensitive information, the goals of cyber criminals also focus on creating significant operational disruptions and stopping normal processes.

Take these scenarios for instance, all of which are based on attacks reported by Florida public entities:

- An email with an invoice was sent to an organization from an email address they thought was associated with one of their commonly used contractors. A large payment of taxpayer funded dollars was made for the assumed contractor's service to what officials later discovered was a fake account. This attack resulted in what is known as "spear phishing."
- A third-party payment processor often used by districts for processing online payments for utility bills, permits, etc. suffered a breach that resulted in the exposure of credit card and other personal data for over 40 of their clients and their numerous customers. In total, records from this attack for over 20,000 individuals were found for sale on the dark web.
- A group of employees was sent an email from an address that appeared to be from their Village Manager. The email included an attachment infected with malware that quickly spread to other employee computers, eventually locking them out of their system and files using a method called encryption. In what is known as a ransomware attack, the hackers demanded thousands of dollars in bitcoin to unlock or decrypt the computers.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

(...continued from previous page)

- A water treatment plant serving over 15,000 residents experienced a cyberattack where a hacker attempted to increase the levels of sodium hydroxide or lye to potentially poisonous levels. Fortunately, staff noticed the attempt before it resulted in a major issue, but the story went viral in a very short amount of time.

These examples highlight the importance of cybersecurity controls for districts. A successful cyberattack can have a devastating impact including disrupting district operations, costing taxpayer money, a loss of productivity, and of course damaging the district's reputation.

As both cyber criminals and districts become more technologically sophisticated, the need to stay abreast of emerging risks remains paramount. While the rapid proliferation of mobile devices, apps, and internet connected infrastructure collectively known as the Internet of Things (IoT) leads to increased efficiency and convenience, it also comes with a need for increasingly robust security measures.

Best Practices to Protect Your District from Cyber Attacks:

Every district is unique and in order to effectively defend against and respond to a cyberattack, each district must understand the potential for a variety of threats and how they can impact specific operations. Your board, legal counsel, risk management team, and IT department or vendor should work together to create and refine

your plan that incorporates both defensive and offensive strategies. The most effective way to defend against cyberattacks is a layered approach that combines people, process, and technology. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to preventing cyberattacks, there are several steps that districts can take to mitigate their exposure including:

- Conducting regular security assessments to identify and address vulnerabilities. Assessments should identify the types of sensitive information stored, who has access, as well as what hardware and software is being used. This will help in getting a complete picture of the security and training gaps within your cybersecurity program.
- Having a plan in place to respond to cyberattacks. Just as your district prepares plans for continuity of operations in the event of a natural disaster, it must also prepare plans to restore computer systems and networks in the event of a cyberattack. If you experience an attack or data breach, you may be legally required to notify certain people including key stakeholders and residents. It's important to evaluate what information and how much detail should be released. Including a focus on improving future actions will help in restoring public trust.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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- Use multi-factor authentication (MFA) to protect access to sensitive systems and data along with a strong employee password policy. MFA requires users to submit additional information besides just a username and password before being allowed to login to an account or gain access to a network or system.
- Keeping software up to date with the latest security patches. Software that is not current can more easily be taken advantage of by hackers and cyber criminals who are constantly scanning for these vulnerabilities, much like how thieves check for unlocked windows or doors to break into a house.
- Conducting regular backups which are one of the easiest and least expensive cybersecurity precautions districts can take to mitigate the effects of data loss.
- Managing vendors. Many districts outsource functions and rely on third-party service providers for a range of services including payment processing, payroll, and overall fiscal management. Conducting due diligence and risk management assessments on vendors that manage sensitive data and interact district systems and networks is an important part of a cyber security program. Furthermore, districts should impose contractual obligations on such vendors that include requirements to adhere to cybersecurity practices and maintain adequate cybersecurity insurance for the exposures they are responsible for.
- Implementing strong security controls, such as firewalls, intrusion detection systems, anti-virus, anti-malware, anti-spyware software, use of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) and data encryption.
- Maintaining cyber liability coverage. One way districts may be able to offset some of the risks and limit their total exposure is through insurance. It is important to note that this type of coverage is intended to complement, not replace, a district's cybersecurity program. Districts who have not implemented safeguards to protect themselves from cyberattacks should keep in mind that they may expect to pay higher premiums for cyber coverage.

By taking these steps, districts can make it more difficult for cybercriminals to succeed. While many of these measures are simple and low cost, such as having a password policy, updating software, and ongoing staff training, it's important to remember that cybersecurity is not something districts can achieve with a "one and done" approach. As districts leverage new technologies while cyberattacks continue to evolve and become more commonplace, the permanent state of cybersecurity vigilance should be viewed as a new normal.

By taking steps to improve their cybersecurity, districts can help to protect their data, their systems, and their reputations from cyberattacks. For additional tools and resources designed to support your district's risk management program, please reach out to riskservices@egisadvisors.com.



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

SPECIAL ARTICLE

The Importance of Finding the Root Cause of an Accident

By Mike Marinan, Director of Member Services - Public Risk Underwriters of Florida, Inc.



When an accident occurs it's critically important to find out why it happened. Once you determine the why, you can implement measures to make sure that accident doesn't happen again. When investigating a workplace accident, it's important to remove the immediate hazard, such as a faulty piece of machinery or an unstable shelf. Even more crucial is figuring out the underlying cause of the problem.

A root cause analysis (RCA) helps you determine core issues that led to the accident. When you know the root cause(s), you can correct them to prevent similar incidents going forward. A root cause analysis refers to the process of identifying the underlying cause of an issue or incident. Whether you're investigating an employee who crushed their foot when they dropped a heavy box or one who tripped over a cord in a poorly lit office, an RCA goes beyond simply removing the immediate cause of the accident.

Performed near the end of an accident investigation, RCAs aim to determine the true cause of the problem, rather than just addressing the symptoms. A root cause is a fundamental cause that, had it not been present, the issue wouldn't have occurred. Identifying an accident's root cause and eliminating it should prevent the issue from recurring.

So then, how do we identify the "root or true" cause of accidents? One common approach is called the "5 Why". This technique begins with a problem statement and then starts asking the question "Why?" Why questions are repeated several times (generally around 5 times, thus the name of this technique), until the root causes become more apparent. Here's an example:

Problem: An employee slips and falls in the Vehicle Maintenance Area.

Q: Why did the employee fall?

A: He slipped on hydraulic oil that was on the floor.

Q: Why was there hydraulic oil on the floor?

A: It leaked from the forklift while in operation.

Q: Why was the forklift used with a hydraulic oil leak?

A: The forklift operator didn't know it was leaking.

Q: Why didn't the forklift operator know it was leaking?

A: He didn't check for oil leaks before operating the forklift.

Q: Why didn't he check for oil leaks?

A: Because checking for oil leaks is not on the pre-operational inspection checklist that the operator completes each shift.



You can continue to go further, but at this point a root cause is emerging. Specifically, checking for oil leaks is not part of the forklift operator's daily forklift inspection. A traditional investigation may find the cause to be "oil spilled on the floor" with the remedy limited to cleaning up the spill and instructing the worker to be more careful. A root cause analysis would reveal that the oil on the floor was merely a symptom of a more basic, or fundamental problem. From here, corrective actions become clear: update the forklift daily inspection checklist to include a check for oil leaks and train employees on this updated procedure.

Is this the only possible conclusion in this situation? The answer is no. In most cases, there could be several different responses for each step along the way. For instance, we could have said, the oil was on the floor because it leaked from the forklift AND because no one took the time to clean it up. We can then ask, "Why didn't anyone take the time to clean it up?" and can continue down this other path to yet another root cause.

Accident Investigations that do not involve root cause analysis tend to address the symptoms of problems rather than the problems themselves. As such, corrective actions tend to be quick fixes that are not effective in preventing the problem from reoccurring. So, while Root Cause Analysis using the 5-Why Technique often takes more time, it is well-worth the effort. When root causes are identified, corrective actions are more effective, leading to a continuously improving and safer workplace. If you would like more information about RCA please contact your Preferred Loss Control Consultant and/or visit Training Network Now and view the streaming video on Accident Investigation.

Mike Marinan, Director of Member Services - Public Risk Underwriters of Florida, Inc. - Mike has a degree in Industrial Safety Engineering and over 37 years experience in the Safety and Risk Management field. He has been employed by Public Risk Underwriters of Florida, Inc. for 19 years. He holds an RMPE designation, holds a General Lines 220 and 218 licenses, is an active member of Central Florida PRIMA, as well as an active member of ASSP and numerous related Safety and Health organizations. He was a Governor appointee to the Task Force on Workplace Safety.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Revolutionizing your Emergency Communications

Written by Anthony Seguin,
TheGovApp.com

Mobile apps have revolutionized the way we live, work, and communicate. They have seamlessly integrated into our daily routines, simplifying tasks and enhancing our lives in ways we couldn't have imagined a decade ago. Beyond their convenience in everyday activities, theGovApp.com's mobile apps have also proven to be indispensable tools for government agencies in improving emergency communication and response. In this article, we will explore how mobile apps have become an integral part of our lives and examine their crucial role in emergency situations.

Mobile apps have undeniably become an integral part of modern life, significantly enhancing our daily routines in numerous ways. One prime example is the proliferation of governmental apps designed to improve citizen engagement and access to public services. In the past few years government-related apps saw a remarkable surge in usage, with millions of downloads recorded nationwide. These apps empower citizens to access essential services, from submitting service requests to paying utility bills, all from the convenience of their smartphones.

They also provide crucial information on public health, safety alerts, and emergency services, facilitating better communication between governments and their constituents.

Government agencies have harnessed the power of mobile apps to enhance early warning systems for various emergencies, ensuring timely communication and response to protect citizens. A striking case study is the use of theGovApp.com's push notification platform as a means to deliver efficient, timely and effective communications. This integrated mobile alert system allows government agencies to send emergency notifications directly to mobile devices, alerting citizens about imminent threats like natural disasters, missing persons alerts, or local security threats. During events like hurricanes and wildfires, the notification system has played a pivotal role in notifying residents and enabling them to take necessary precautions, potentially saving lives.

A recent example was when hurricane Idalia took aim at coastal Florida. Over 50 Florida agencies began using their mobile apps to push notification to their citizens to inform them of available storm resources and potential storm track changes, as well as regular updates. In addition to custom notifications, when enabled, theGovApp's mobile apps will automatically rebroadcast the National Weather Service Alerts. Thus adding a layer of communications that happens automatically. Citizens have become accustomed to receiving these notifications and expect them to come from their local government as well.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

(...continued from previous page)

Mobile apps have transformed the way we live, work, and respond to emergencies. They have become an integral part of our daily routines, simplifying tasks and enhancing our quality of life. Moreover, special districts have recognized their potential as invaluable tools for efficient emergency communication and response. theGovApp.com serves over 50 clients in Florida and has a resume of over 1,000 apps built nationwide. If you are ready to take your communications to the next level, please reach out to us for a free consultation where we will review your current communications and future communications goals and strategies to determine the best solution for your special district.

Communications Strategist Anthony Seguin can be reached at aseguin@myocv.com or via phone at 352-877-9796 for further information.

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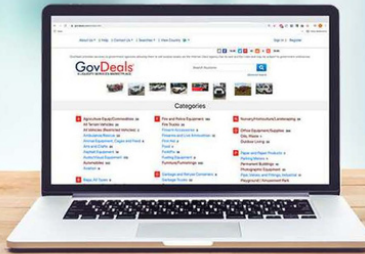
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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

ARE .GOV DOMAINS COMING TO SPECIAL DISTRICTS?

By Annelise Spargo, Head of Marketing, Streamline

Many districts are not currently using a .gov domain, or they don't realize they can get one. However, we are starting to see more and more districts setting up their website with a .gov. Some states are even pushing for it, like AB 1637 in California, which could mandate the use of a .gov by districts. If history has shown us anything, it's that California often sets the tone for districts across the country. So if .gov domains become a requirement in California, other states could follow suit (note: a .gov domain is not currently required for districts in any state).

Setting up a .gov domain does require a lot of paperwork, but the impacts just might be worth it. Let's dive into some of the impacts of using a .gov website domain.

Impacts of using a .gov website domain

- **Credibility:** A .gov domain is reserved for government agencies and organizations, having a website with this domain can increase credibility and trustworthiness among visitors.
- **Trust:** Visitors to a .gov website are more likely to trust the information provided, as they know it has been vetted and approved by a government agency.
- **Authority:** A .gov website is considered an authoritative source of information, which can increase the visibility and ranking of the website in search engines.

- **Security:** The .gov domain is managed by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), which has strict security protocols to ensure the safety and protection of government information.
- **Accessibility:** Government websites with a .gov domain are required to comply with accessibility guidelines to ensure that all visitors, including those with disabilities, can access the information on the website.

Districts can even use their .gov as the primary email-sending domain, which also has many benefits, like:

- **Improved email deliverability:** Email providers may prioritize emails from .gov domains, which can improve the likelihood of messages being delivered to the intended recipients' inboxes.
- **Enhanced security:** .gov domains may have stricter security protocols in place, such as DMARC policies, which can help prevent email spoofing and phishing attacks.
- **Better branding:** Using a .gov domain can help reinforce the organization's brand and mission, particularly for government entities that have established a strong reputation.

It is important to note that obtaining a .gov domain can be a somewhat rigorous process.

You will need to gather a variety of documentation, and there are strict guidelines governing the use of these domains. The website must be used solely for official government purposes, and any content must comply with federal and state laws and regulations.



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BY DATABASE FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS, INC.

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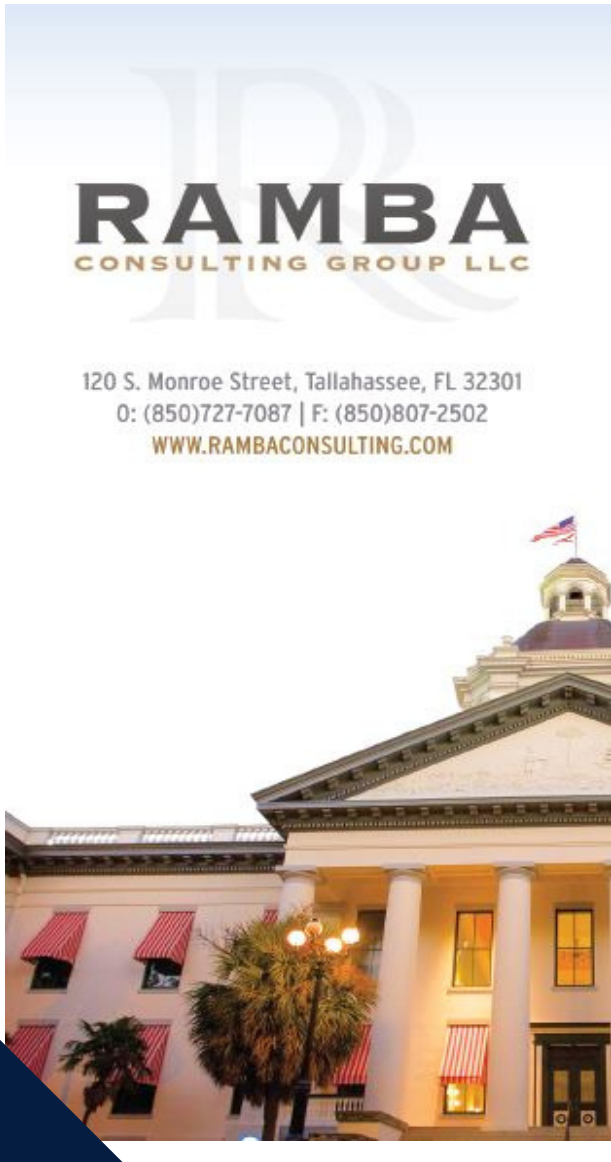
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