



## **Executive Office of the Governor**

### **Office of Adoption and Child Protection (OACP)**

I'd like to personally thank each Council member who took the time to speak with me and share their thoughts, ideas and perspectives on how we can refine, improve and strengthen what we do as an Advisory Council. Initially, I planned to survey each of you via e-mail to get a sense of the work and accomplishments of the Advisory Council for the past year. After giving it much thought, I decided to schedule phone conference calls with all current and some former Council members. This decision was made to see beyond written words and capture the true perspective of each individual. To say that the time spent speaking with available Council members was valuable is definitely an understatement!

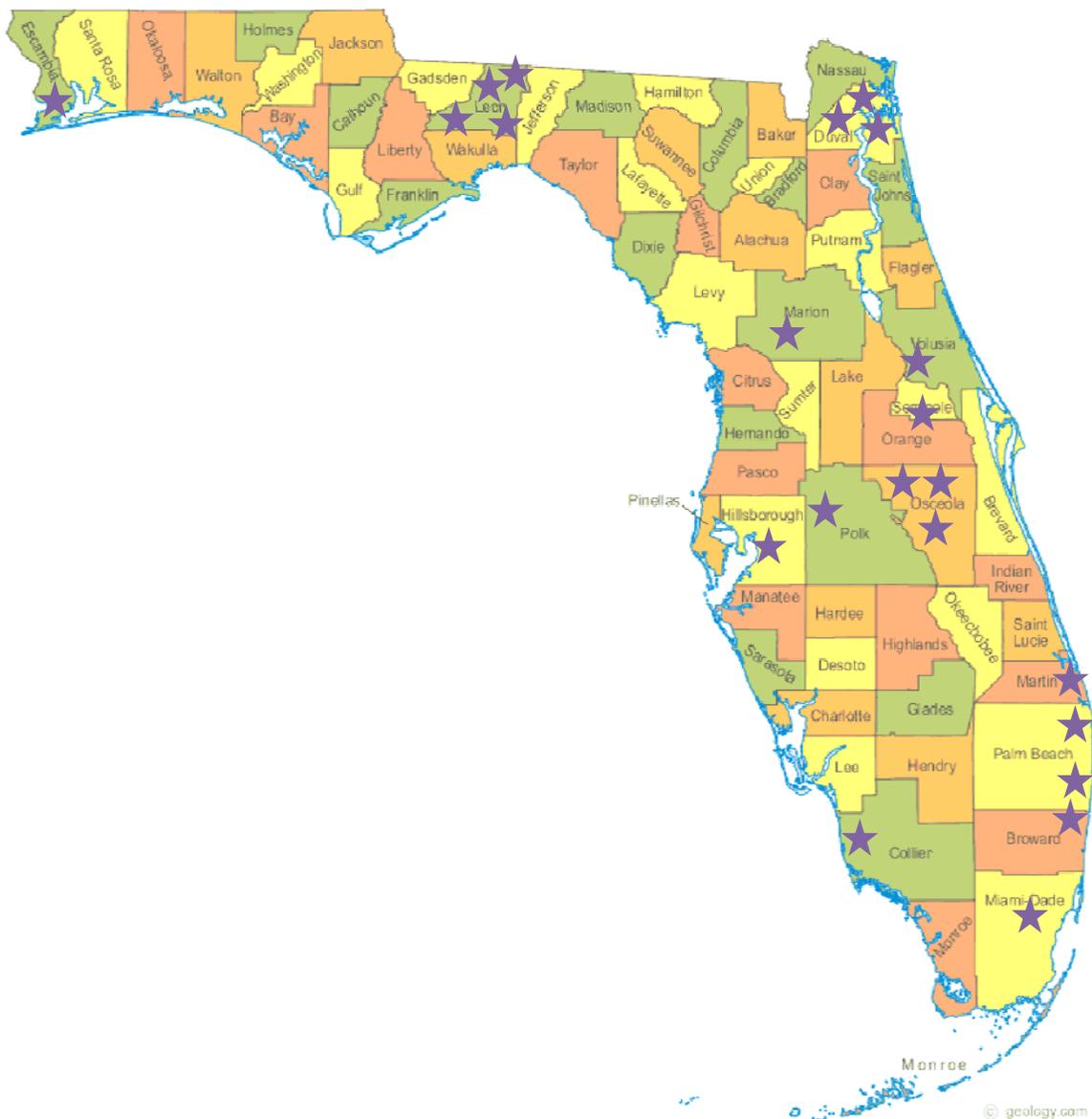
The following pages include a summary compilation of the design of the Advisory Council, attendance at scheduled advisory meetings during the period of November 2011 through August 2012, and responses provided during individual phone conversations that occurred during the period of August 22, 2012 through October 9, 2012. The intent of providing this information is not to "call-out" the Advisory Council, rather it's to identify challenges we have experienced so that we can learn and grow from them. The first step in solving problems is to identify where problems exist and begin to re-examine our commitment to coming together as a team to solve those problems with creative and innovative strategies. Since we cannot solve all problems alone, we will need to seek necessary support systems that can provide time and resources to advance the work and accomplishments of the Advisory Council.

It is with great honor that I serve the families and youth of our great state. I get excited thinking about the opportunity to work with the Advisory Council so that we can unleash our potential and be able to hang our hats at the end of day knowing we have positively impacted the lives of the children and families we touch!

## Advisory Council Design

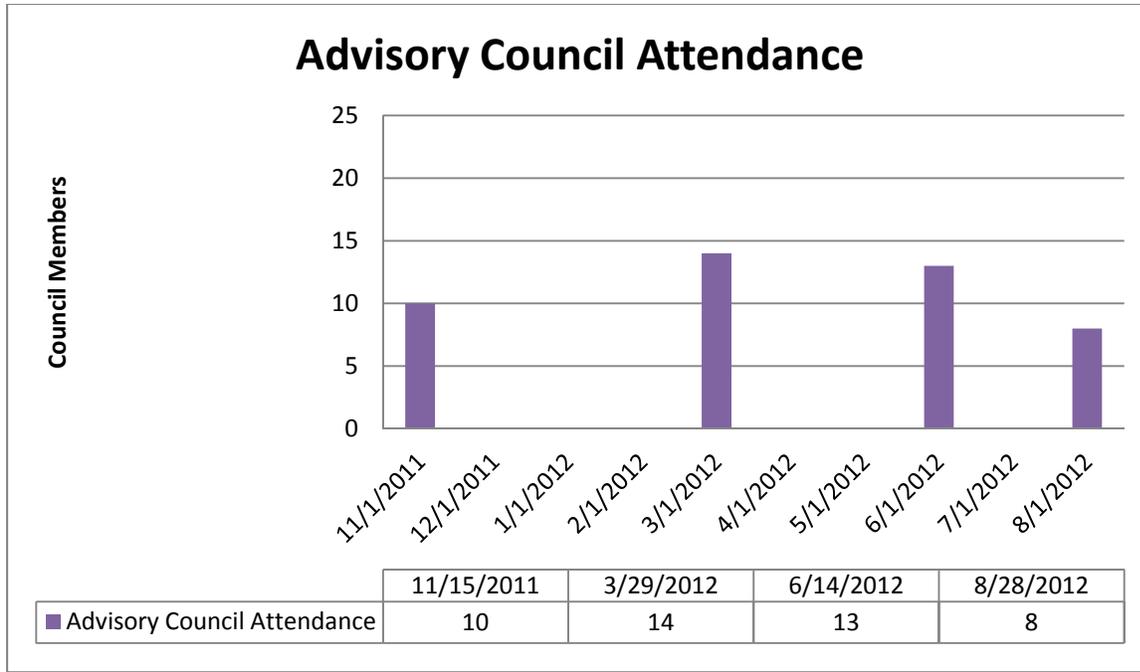
The Council, as defined in Florida Statutes 14.31, shall consist of 25 members and is established and assigned to the Executive Office of the Governor. Members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House. Appointment terms are staggered with all Council members serving 4-year terms. A total of 13 members are necessary to have a quorum.

Currently, there are 22 members on the Advisory Council with nine members whose term expired in July 2012. Eight members will have their terms expire in July 2013. There are five applications on file to seek new or re-appointment to the Advisory Council. The map below identifies where current Council members are located throughout the state.



## Advisory Council Attendance

A total of four Advisory Council meetings occurred between November, 2011 and August, 2012. The following identifies Council member attendance during this period.



## FAMOUS QUOTES

"Coming together is a beginning.  
 Keeping together is progress.  
 Working together is success."  
 - *Henry Ford*

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world.  
 Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."  
 - *Unknown*

"Big thinking precedes great achievement."  
 - *Wilferd Peterson*

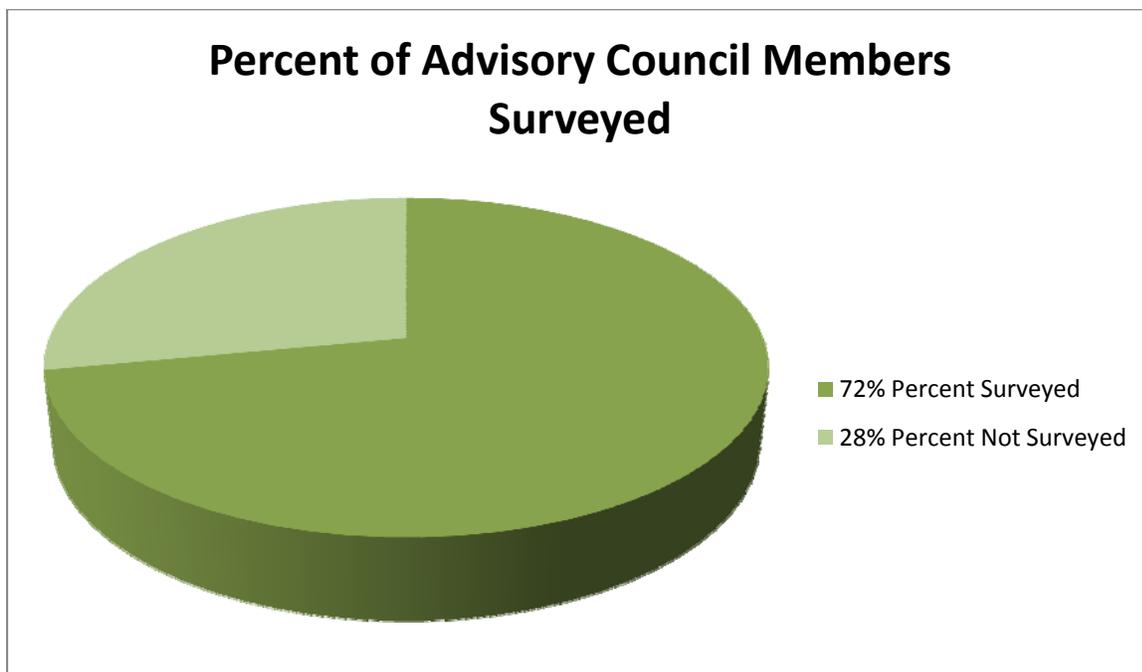
"Teamwork: Simply stated, it is less me and more we."  
 - *Unknown*

## Survey responses of Council members

Of the 22 current Council members, our office reached out by calling each member to speak with them to obtain their insight and feedback about the following topics:

- Accomplishments of the Advisory Council during the past year.
- The barriers/challenges faced by the Advisory Council.
- The focus of the Advisory Council moving forward.
- Willingness to lead a workgroup to accomplish one or more of the Advisory Council's priorities/initiatives.

Of the 22 Council members, we were able to speak with 16 members (others did not return our calls except for one, which we were still unable to connect with). Our office also spoke with two former Council members to hear about their experiences while participating on the Advisory Council under previous administration. The most salient responses are identified for each topic.



### **Accomplishments of the Advisory Council:**

- *“We were able to have regular meetings because in the past, there were times we didn’t speak as a group.”*
- *“We had some good discussions that were interesting.”*
- *“Some of the speakers/presentations that were provided during our meetings were informational and we were able to meet state agency personnel.”*
- *“We disseminated information out to our contacts that resulted in the recruitment of more foster parents.”*
- *“We took on Operation Strong Families as one of our initiatives.”*
- *“It was good when Council members came in person to meetings.”*

### **Barriers/challenges faced by the Advisory Council:**

- *“Unsure about the mission and vision of the Advisory Council.”*
- *“What is our purpose for being on the Council? What is my purpose?”*
- *“It seems as we are starting the Council for the first time.”*
- *“Low attendance/participation in meetings.”*
- *“Travel is challenging when meetings are held throughout the state.”*
- *“Some Council members bring their own agendas instead of working together as a team.”*
- *“Our messaging needs to be better so faith organizations know what we are about.”*
- *“What are the goals and objectives of the Council?”*
- *“There is a lot of potential in this group and in the work we can do.”*
- *“People not understanding the relationship between/dispelling the myths about church and state.”*

### **The focus of the Advisory Council moving forward:**

- *“Defining our purpose and establishing clear goals and outcomes.”*
- *”Having more Safe Families.”*
- *“Have a conference to bring faith organizations together.”*
- *“Addressing the drug abuse problem within our state.”*
- *“Having something that can be measured to reflect the progress of our work.”*
- *“There are six main issues that communities don’t question the work of faith organizations:*
  - *Child advocacy (adoption, foster care, after school, poverty)*
  - *Single moms*
  - *Alcohol and drug abuse*
  - *Prison transition*
  - *Homelessness*
  - *Teenage issues”*

**The focus of the Advisory Council moving forward (Continued):**

- *“Having initiatives that won’t make churches change their focus areas.”*
- *“Identifying three-five priorities and focusing on quality versus quantity.”*
- *“Focusing on legislation to make recommendations to the state.”*
- *“Have a database of all faith organizations.”*
- *“There needs to be renewed energy within the Council; raising the bar associated with the expectations of the Council.”*
- *“Have ID cards to show we are a representative of the Council.”*
- *“Focusing on the work of faith organizations during times of crisis.”*

**Willingness to lead a workgroup to accomplish one or more of the Advisory Council’s priorities/initiatives:**

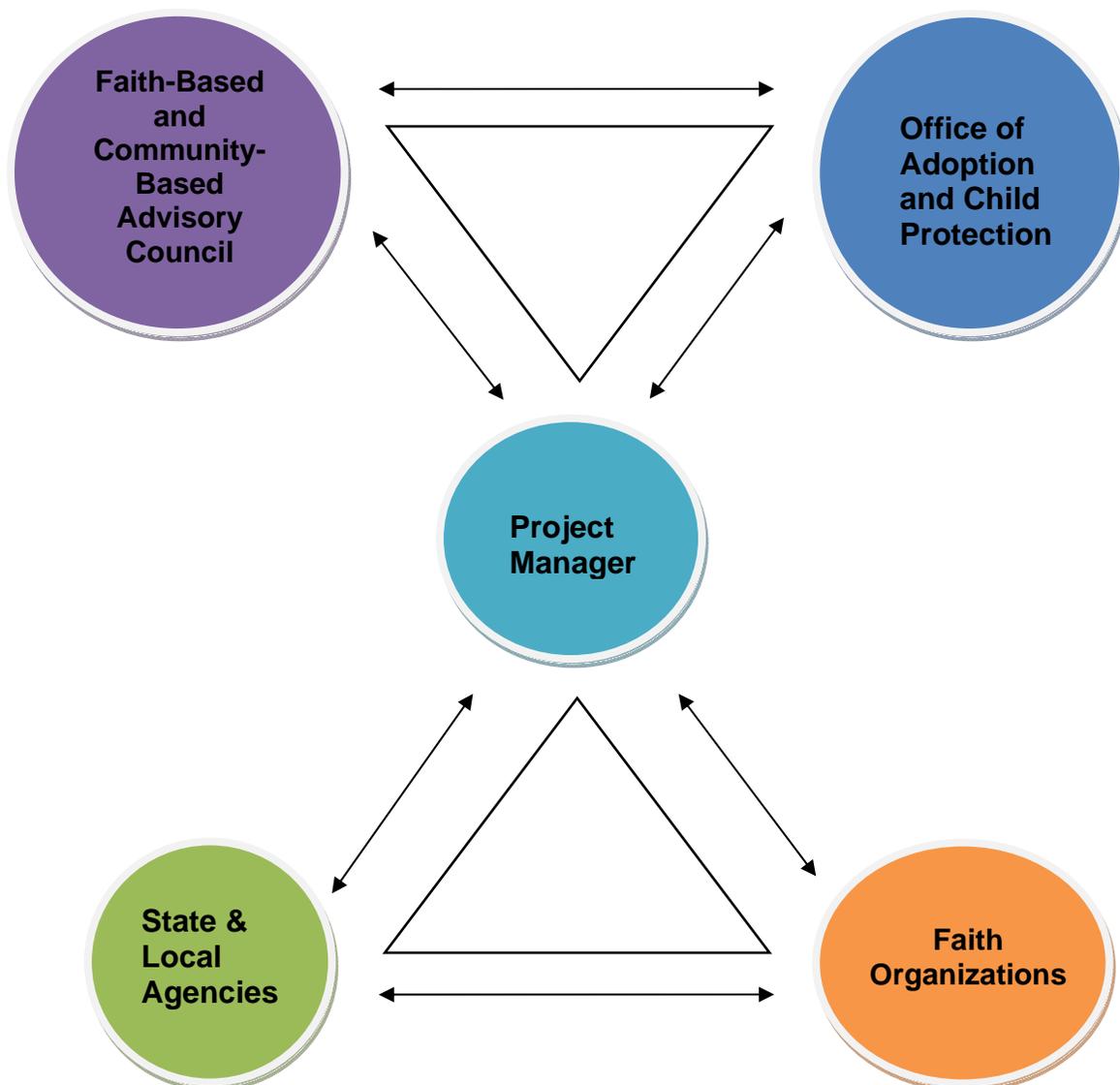
All stated they would be willing to lead a workgroup or would help in any way they can once there is a clear direction/purpose for the work the Advisory Council will perform.

## Proposed Structure

In order to initiate action amongst the Advisory Council, a modified project management framework is proposed that can provide structure and organization to the Advisory Council. This framework establishes a point person, a **project manager**, who will be responsible for an initiative/priority (ie.: **project**). The project manager will take **ownership** for the project and work with the Office of Adoption and Child Protection (OACP), and other Council members to establish goals, objectives, outcomes, and monitor project performance.

The project manager will also work with state and local agencies to **engage** faith organizations throughout the state to build relationships, share ideas and best practices, and develop a statewide network of support.

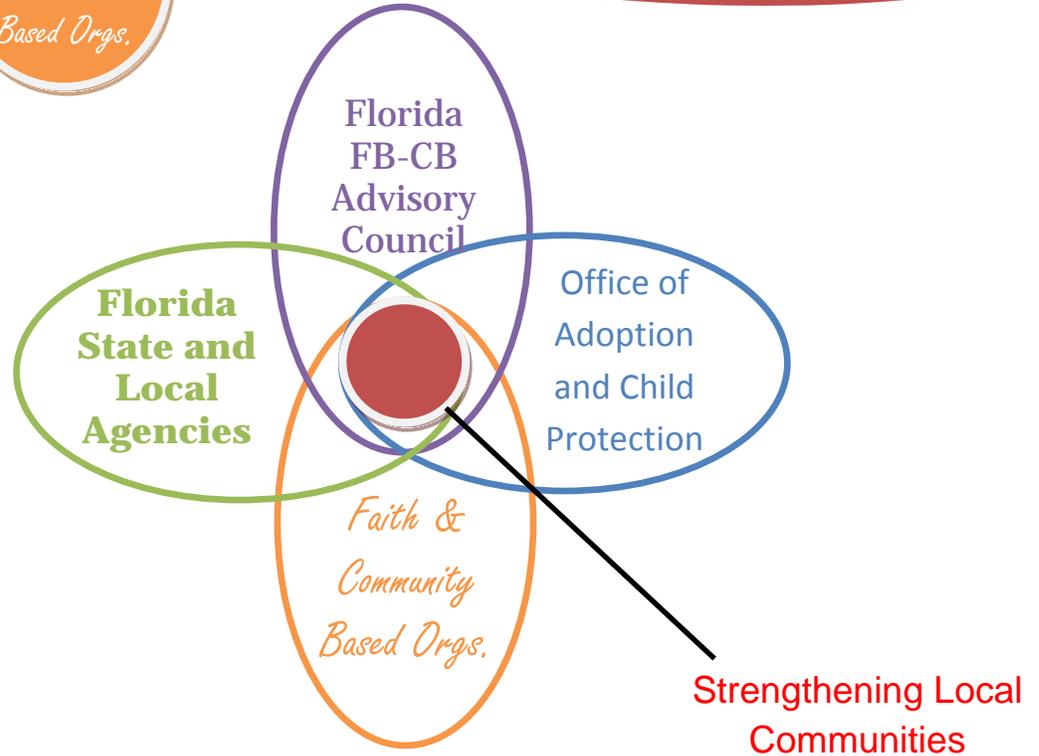
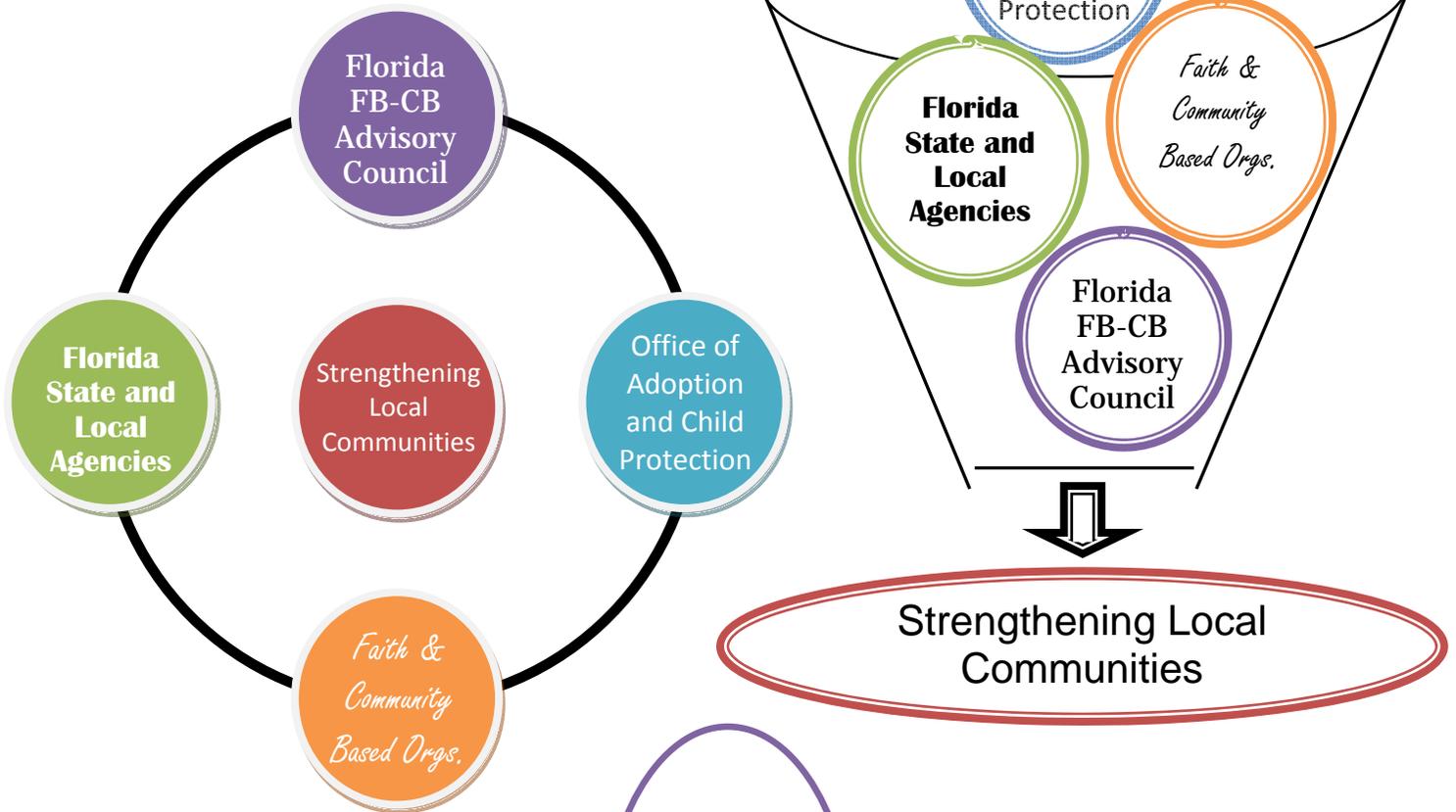
The OACP, along with the Advisory Council Leadership, will serve as the **project sponsor**. The project sponsor is responsible for maintaining open lines of communication with the project managers, providing strategies, and identifying resources to ensure the project is completed and successful.



## **Recommendations**

1. Maintain existing leadership.
2. Identify dates for a strategic planning meeting in early to mid January 2013.
3. Council members begin documenting ideas to be brought to the meeting and shared with the group.
4. First action step: Conduct regional forums inviting local leadership to discuss barriers in working with state government. This should be completed by May.
5. Identifying other faith and community leaders to possibly join the Advisory Council.

No matter how you look at it...



**Our collaborative efforts can achieve our overall goals!**