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New Council to Focus on STEM Education and Skill Development to Bolster Florida Business and Career Opportunities

ORLANDO — Workforce Florida and Enterprise Florida today announced the creation of a statewide council to strengthen the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills of Florida's students as a way to address the increasing demand for jobs requiring strong foundations in these areas. The Florida STEM Council, funded by a \$580,000 grant from Workforce Florida, will connect education, workforce, business and economic development leaders to identify opportunities to build and measure the state's supply of workers with skills and knowledge in these fields to support innovation in existing and emerging industries.

"The STEM Council is going to be an important asset in our ongoing efforts to maximize resources and collaboration in Florida to cultivate industries such as life sciences, aerospace and alternative energy, among others, that strengthen and diversify our state economy," said Workforce Florida Chair Belinda Keiser. "By fostering these skills, which are demanded by today's marketplace as well as tomorrow's, we are helping to grow our state's advantage in the global competition for world-class talent."

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that by 2014, 15 of the 20 fastest growing jobs will require substantial math or science preparation. The Florida STEM Council aims to increase the level and quality of STEM education and training by offering opportunities to learn the latest technologies and applications of these disciplines within high-value, targeted industries in the state.

The grant will be used to conduct a series of regional forums to engage stakeholders and better align and coordinate STEM education efforts across Florida. It will also provide for externships for teachers and professors giving them opportunities to learn more about how to apply STEM curriculum that prepares students with relevant skills to meet business needs. Internships also will be available to students studying STEM disciplines to introduce them to career opportunities and bolster efforts to retain such talent in

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Florida. Also participating on the council will be the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida Council of 100 and Florida education leaders K-20, including representatives from the Department of Education as well as public and private colleges and universities, among others. The idea for the STEM Council was originated by Enterprise Florida in response to gaps identified by Florida businesses in the Roadmap to Florida's Future, the state economic development plan. Today's announcement was made during the quarterly Enterprise Florida Board of Directors meeting.

"This collaboration is the right opportunity at the right time for Florida," said Allan Bense, Vice Chairman of Enterprise Florida. "Florida's success in the 21st Century economy will depend greatly on our ability to train, retain and retrain a ready workforce of problem solvers and innovators who are well skilled in STEM fields."

Industries that already have been identified as targets for the STEM Council include life sciences, aerospace, energy, manufacturing, information technology and homeland security and defense, among others. The STEM Council seeks to create a stronger and more dynamic workforce that will drive productivity in such industries, creating high-skill, high-wage employment opportunities for Floridians.

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About Workforce Florida

Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) is the statewide workforce investment board led by leaders in business and government and charged with overseeing Florida's workforce system, which includes 24 regional workforce boards and nearly 90 One-Stop Centers. Its mission is to develop strategies that help Floridians advance in the workforce while supporting economic development priorities and strengthening the state's business climate. Learn more about Florida's workforce resources and solutions at www.EmployFlorida.com.

About Enterprise Florida

Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI) is a partnership between Florida's business and government leaders and is the principal economic development organization for the State of Florida. Headquartered in Orlando, EFI's mission is to create and retain quality jobs and increase economic opportunities for Floridians by supporting strong and growing businesses and positioning Florida as a globally competitive business location. In pursuit of its mission, EFI works closely with a statewide network of economic development partners and is funded both by the State of Florida and by private-sector businesses.