



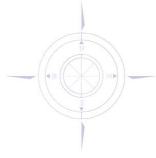
Workforce Florida Strategic Plan Update

January 1, 2008



Workforce
florida, inc.

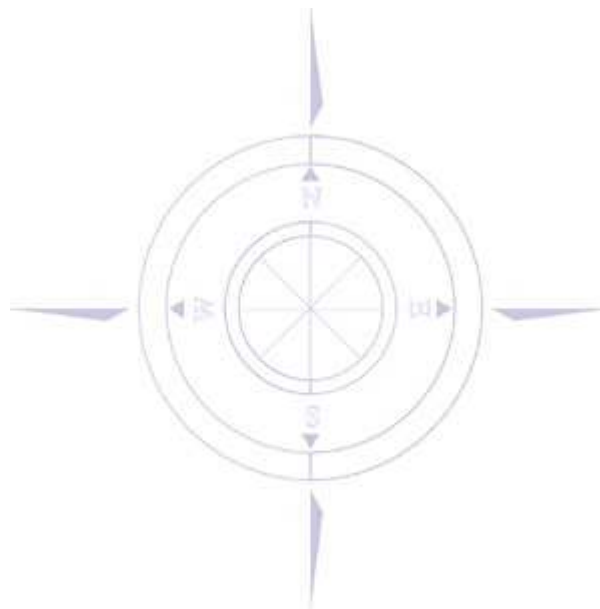
Katherine E. Wilson, Workforce Florida Inc., Chairman
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Florida will develop a globally competitive workforce.

Mission

Florida will develop the state's business climate by designing and implementing strategies that help Floridians enter, remain, and advance in the workforce, becoming more highly skilled and successful, benefiting Florida business and the entire state.

Guiding Principles

- One Workforce System—Shared Vision
- Demand Driven Business Model
- Local Market Control
- Private Sector Leadership
- Universal Customer Access
- Strategic Partnerships
- Bias Toward Action
- Individual Performance Accountability
- Innovation





Introduction

Talent. Every business needs it to survive and indeed thrive. That's why the mission and work of Florida's workforce system is critical to the state's economic development efforts. As the lead workforce policy organization, Workforce Florida Inc. is charged with policy-setting and oversight—ensuring that the system is responsive to the needs of Florida businesses for a competitive workforce and delivering innovative opportunities for citizens to advance their skills through training and employment. It does so in conjunction with its key workforce partners, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (the state agency responsible for implementing policy, administering federal and state funds and providing technical assistance to local workforce boards), and the state's 24 Regional Workforce Boards (locally controlled, business-led boards primarily responsible for delivering workforce services often through one-stop centers). What makes Florida's workforce system unique in the nation is that Workforce Florida is a nonprofit, public-private organization that not only charts the strategic direction of the system it also leads by directing the state's appropriated resources for workforce services. The system's structure was created through the Workforce Innovation Act of 2000. It was designed by the state law's architects to ensure Florida's workforce system remains demand-driven and flexible to meet needs in an ever-changing economy, while maintaining a strong commitment to performance and accountability. For these reasons and more, Florida's workforce system is hailed as a national model.

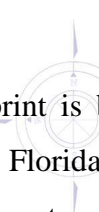
In 2005, Workforce Florida created its five-year strategic plan “Re-iMagine: Creating a Workforce for Florida's Future.” (*A copy of the 2005-2010 plan is included with this report.*) Consistent with its statutory charge to “design and implement strategies” that advance workforce training and Florida's business climate, Workforce Florida has identified eight strategic imperatives. They are to:

- **Partner with Business to Deliver a Demand-Driven Workforce System**
- **Support Training and Development of Florida's Talent Pipeline**
- **Leverage Technology to Enhance Florida's Workforce System**
- **Strengthen Florida's Rural Workforce System**

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- **Strengthen Partnership with Workforce Education**
 - **Marketing: Strengthen Awareness, Education and Image of Florida’s Workforce System**
 - **Strengthen and Coordinate Economic Development Partnerships**
 - **Identify Entrepreneurial Opportunities to Deliver Flexible Earned Income Streams**

The strategic plan is aligned with the state’s economic development plan, the “Roadmap to Florida’s Future.” Workforce Florida works closely with its strategic partner Enterprise Florida Inc., which serves as the state’s lead economic development organization and is also a public-private partnership. *(For a quick look at linkages between the two strategic plans see the card insert included with this report.)* In fact, both the Chairman of the Workforce Florida Board of Directors and the Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation are members of the Enterprise Florida Board. In addition to Enterprise Florida, Workforce Florida collaborates with numerous other business, economic development and education partners to ensure training resources are prudently invested in ways that boost local, regional and state economic development initiatives aimed at diversifying and growing Florida’s economy.

Seven years after the workforce system was revamped, there was general agreement among the state’s workforce partners during the summer of 2007 that the timing was right for a dialogue and examination of the mission, accomplishments and opportunities for improvement of the system. That agreement culminated in a statewide series of hearings in August and September seeking renewed solutions and fresh ideas to further advance the innovation that has made Florida’s workforce system a national leader. The forums were held in Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tallahassee, Destin and Sarasota. More than 500 stakeholders participated in the dialogue including CEOs, other top-level executives, and owners from Florida businesses, along with representatives from local and state economic development and business advocacy organizations, nonprofit community groups, state agencies, K-12 schools, universities, community colleges, and the Florida Legislature as well as other citizens. The forums were moderated by Don Upton of Fairfield Index Inc. The resulting feedback, as compiled in a fall final report by Fairfield Index, provides a blueprint that outlines opportunities for continuous improvements and collaboration to further strengthen



Florida's workforce system. This blueprint is being offered up as the framework for the current strategic direction of Workforce Florida as it continues to lead Florida's workforce system, through collaboration with key partners, to deliver globally competitive talent for Florida businesses. That direction remains consistent with the imperatives outlined in the 2005-2010 strategic plan. This document represents the statutorily required annual strategic plan update. Following is an overview of the forum feedback, an outline of the resulting key priorities, a brief look at Workforce Florida's governance and a roundup of several critical workforce issues facing the state.




Designing the Future, Delivering Talent

For an idea of just how important talent is to the state's economic prosperity, consider this message from participants in the statewide series of forums. When polled about what they considered to be Florida's top competitive asset, the overwhelming first choice at every forum was location. Florida's geographical position as a commerce gateway to the Americas was an obvious choice. Next, participants were asked to rank what they think should be the state's most competitive asset in today's global economy. Again, they responded in every location with the same top pick: talent. That was followed by its education systems and businesses, as other aspirations for ensuring a competitive Florida in the 21st Century.

How do we get there? During the forums, stakeholder participants discussed the history and legacy of Florida's modern workforce system; changing markets; the engagement of private-sector leaders; the gathering of vital business intelligence; and opportunities for the future. Florida's workforce system drew strong consensus pertaining to its historical and sustaining values, which, as identified during the forums, include: business-focused and business-informed; regional and local leadership and controls; accountability; promoting innovation and flexibility; and passionate and informed leadership. There also was a clear expectation these values will be preserved and re-enforced during the next decade, and strong agreement that Workforce Florida as a public-private partnership is sound. Having expressed general support for Workforce Florida and the strengths of the public-private movement, at both the state and local board levels, stakeholders focused on a number of overarching interests. They included:

- **Protecting the Solid Historical Foundations for the Public-Private Approach**—The public-private approach to workforce delivery was framed to ensure: the voice and market perspectives of business were a part of decisions about the right programs and services; accountability and measurement were attributes of the entire system; and the diversity of regional and local market qualities were understood and supported. These remain the foundations for continuous improvement, and the best way to facilitate collaboration among businesses, educators, economic developers, and workforce professionals.



- **New or Emerging Initiatives**—Florida’s movement into industry certification and alignment with value jobs of the future through initiatives such as the replication of career academies modeled after the Okaloosa County School District’s CHOICE program and Employ Florida Banner Centers are a priority. All sectors have a responsibility to ensure such initiatives meet the aspirations of Florida’s leaders and have appropriate resources to succeed.

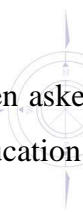
- **Alignment and Promotion of Careers of the Future with Education Partners**—The most important cross-jurisdictional partnership must be in PreK-12, beginning with: sharing intelligence regarding careers of the future; accessing mentors and their workplaces; and helping teachers and administrators align curricula with business standards and meaningful business certifications, among other things.

- **Communications and Marketing**—Forum participants were concerned that businesses of all sizes and other stakeholders are not fully utilizing the strategic programs of Florida’s workforce system. Renewed attention and resources are required to help individuals, families, agencies, nonprofit partners and companies.

- **Utilizing Knowledge of Business Before Policymakers**—Fresh attention and new approaches to marketing are also required to update policymakers at the local, regional and state level. This includes encouraging an intensified voice of business, especially regarding programs and processes that promote innovation.

- **Collaborative Leadership from Workforce Florida**—In most forums, some discussions pivoted on global issues or competitive challenges, such as workforce housing and health insurance, outside the mission of Workforce Florida. Still, participants consistently expressed confidence that Workforce Florida has a unique, essential and powerful voice in encouraging collaboration among all sectors to tackle such complex problems.

- **Talent, Education and Business as Florida’s Competitive Assets**—As noted above, forum participants were asked about Florida’s top competitive assets. While Florida’s global



location was the dominant response, when asked about what Florida's top competitive asset should be, participants said: its talent, education systems and businesses.

- **Focusing on Valuable Niches**—Workforce Florida and its partners must do all they can to access, inform and deliver talent in value niches such as: rural Florida; ex-offenders; Hispanic communities; and any community, organization, or center for education and training that has limited access to resources, technology and capital. The perspectives and aspirations of workers under 30 are vital to developing marketing and communications, helping companies attract and retain talent, and helping communities attract and retain talent.



Priorities

Through the discussion of the issues identified above, six priority areas were defined as opportunities for improvement to build a workforce that will not only support more competitive and prosperous businesses, and thus a stronger state economy, but also lead to training and employment opportunities that improve citizens' quality of life. These areas are:

- **Marketing and Communication**
- **Tapping into Business Leadership and Industry Intelligence for Florida**
- **Collaborating and Promoting Alignment for a Competitive Florida**
- **Supporting and Promoting CHOICE Career Academies and Employ Florida Banner Centers**
- **Perspectives and Guidance of Business Matters in the Policy Community**
- **Seizing Opportunities that Exist in Value “Niches” to Develop and Tap into Talent**

Marketing and Communication: Are we reaching our targets? Florida's businesses are still not fully aware of the programs and products that provide access to and retention of talent. Workforce Florida should recommit to full awareness and full utilization by all stakeholders, and investigate new ways to reach different types of businesses. The workforce system must keep high-performance programs and products continuously “in view” of businesses. Workforce delivery processes may be complex, but they have proven to be especially high-value in Florida. Thus, workforce partners must continuously orient volunteer board members at the state and local levels with the public-private movement.

Tapping into Business Leadership and Industry Intelligence for Florida: Do all workforce partners have all the private-sector leadership and data required to make the right decisions and set the right targets? In order for Florida to become a state that is respected for value instead of low costs, Workforce Florida must be a leading voice for alignment of resources and programs around lifelong learning, skill sets of the future, and Florida's best industry targets. Workforce Florida must help all partners access key business intelligence regarding talent. It must ensure business partners are identified, engaged and used for measurement of effectiveness. Business partners not only help Workforce Florida

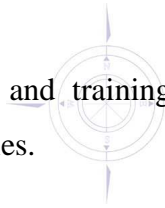


and local workforce boards utilize sound business management and decision-making, but they also can extend and market workforce resources to broader public and business groups

Collaborate and Promote Alignment for a Competitive Florida: Are leading agencies and partners working as closely together as possible, especially to anticipate and support careers of the future? As Workforce Florida improves its state and regional access to business intelligence, it should seek new benchmarks for success. It must also find ways to restate Florida’s talent position in the global economy and be “No. 1” in alignment with industry certifications and other specifications for talent. Workforce Florida must continue to lead and collaborate by example, supporting ideas and programs in K-12 that improve students’ access to wealth-creating careers in Florida.

Support and Promote CHOICE Academies and Employ Florida Banner Centers: Are public and private sector resources in place to take these important projects to the highest possible levels of performance? CHOICE career academies were created in Okaloosa County in 2001 and represent the next generation of career and technical programs in Florida high schools. Workforce Florida and the entire workforce system are committed to supporting efforts to transform career and technical education programs in Florida high schools to ensure students are being prepared for the high-skills, high-wage jobs of the 21st Century. That commitment has led to the workforce system’s role in helping to create and expand the now nationally recognized CHOICE career academies. Through CHOICE academies, students earn industry certifications while simultaneously earning high school, and often college, credits. The academies are designed to offer skills training in high-value sectors such as aerospace, energy, health, information technology and manufacturing. Since 2005, Workforce Florida has awarded nearly \$4 million to replicate CHOICE-model academies in 16 school districts as well as to create the Employ Florida Banner Center for Secondary Career Academies that offers technical assistance statewide to districts seeking to reform and transform their career education offerings. Additionally the Florida Career and Professional Education Act signed into law in 2007 requires every school district to have at least one career and professional academy in place in 2008 that engages education, industry

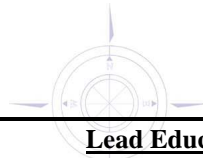
and workforce to create curriculum and training that lead to industry certifications for students and support regional economies.



Banner Centers serve as a resource for cutting-edge training for entry-level and experienced workers who need to upgrade their skills in key sectors tied to Florida's economic development roadmap such as biotechnology, aviation/aerospace, health sciences, logistics and distribution, construction and manufacturing. Most often based at a community college or university, Banner Centers represent an innovative and critical link to the lifelong learning that's needed to keep Florida's workforce talent on the leading edge. Still a relatively new initiative, Banner Centers bring industry, workforce, education and economic development together to create cutting-edge curricula to train workers in targeted high-skills, high-wage sectors. Workforce Florida has awarded more than \$8 million in grants to create and support Banner Centers. There are 10 Banner Centers statewide. Two additional centers—information technology (Seminole Community College) and alternative energy (University of Central Florida)—are expected to get under way in early 2008. More than 26 colleges and universities are part of the initiative. *(A list of Banner Centers and lead institutions is provided on the next page.)*

CHOICE career academies and Banner Centers provide some of the best opportunities to link industry needs with curricula. In combination, they: respond to Florida's businesses in the near term; encourage communication about trends, threats and growth in the long-term; and help economic developers, workforce professionals, and educators focus on the delivery of qualified talent. Both efforts require significant and sustaining resources in their early stages and are aligned with business' desire for technical skills certification. School districts, community colleges and other higher education partners are being asked to innovate, but they need to take risks with confidence that both sectors are in full support.





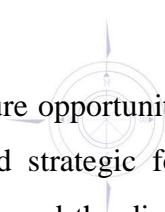
<u>Employ Florida Banner Centers</u>	<u>Lead Education Partners</u>
Aviation and Aerospace	Florida Community College at Jacksonville and Brevard Community College
Biotechnology	University of Florida
Career Academies	Okaloosa County School District
Construction	Santa Fe Community College
Energy	Lake-Sumter Community College
Health Sciences	Valencia Community College
Homeland Security and Defense	Indian River Community College
Financial Services*	Miami Dade College
Logistics & Distribution	Lake City Community College
Manufacturing	Hillsborough Community College

**This program is currently on hiatus.*

Perspectives and Guidance of Business Matters in the Policy Community: Do policymakers have access to business perspectives and trends on Florida’s talent in a global economy? Forum participants from the Legislature, business advocacy organizations, and businesses, indicated that business counsel is not effectively utilized before policymakers and regulators on workforce issues. “The door is open” and the interest is strong among their leaders in learning how Florida’s shared assets, agencies, infrastructure, and businesses should work together in development and improvement of Florida’s talent. Workforce Florida must continue to identify and act on ways to orient business leaders to the most pressing challenges, opportunities for improvement in systems and resources, and ways to support alignment among economic development, educational, and workforce development organizations.

Seizing Opportunities that Exist in Value “Niches” to Develop and Tap into Talent: What opportunities are ahead to customize programs focused on developing talent within value niches? Florida’s public-private approach to delivering workforce services is

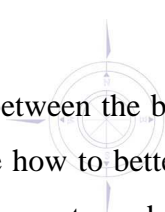




generally viewed as a success, so future opportunities for measurable improvement in client services require new intelligence and strategic focus in key niches such as seniors and retirees, young talent, Hispanic talent, and the disabled. Workforce Florida and its partners must do all they can to access, inform and deliver talent in value niches such as rural Florida, ex-offenders, Hispanic communities, workers under 30s, and any community, organization, or center for education and training that has limited access to resources, technology and capital. The timing is right and the need exists to refocus attention on the unique opportunities and needs of rural Florida because of: the collaboration and target industry information emerging from the Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC) initiative; the need for entrepreneurial ideas in all parts of the state; the build-out of a number of urban markets; and the gaps in transportation and other infrastructure in many rural markets.

The following are recommended action steps to begin to address the above outlined priorities:

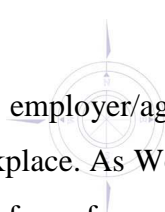
1. Build an even better network of business partners to identify and utilize market intelligence about changing business practices, global competition, and careers of the future. We must continue to also build on the Employ Florida Marketplace, which is a critical workforce tool used for assisting businesses, job seekers, economic developers and students, among others.
2. Collaborate with all key partners and agencies to focus on Florida's industry strengths, places where talent is or should be migrating, measures of global competitiveness, and seamless and informed partnerships among all partners involved in workforce delivery. In doing so, the priority of better utilizing and publicizing the resources available through the state's Labor Market Statistics Center, housed within the Agency for Workforce Innovation, should be maintained.
3. Focus marketing resources to reach every sector and every niche. Ensure the private sector has full knowledge of programs and products and measure business usage and penetration.
4. Ensure business is the briefing, knowledge and research agent for change.

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5. Seek a seamless relationship between the business demand-side (current and far into the future) and K-12. Evaluate how to better collaborate with K-12 in the utilization of great demand-side data, forecasts and trends. Find new ways to communicate career opportunities upstream into public education. Join with educators in celebrating alignment with certifications and job specifications that jump-start careers. Work with the Agency for Workforce Innovation to provide data and market intelligence that support restructuring or elimination of curricula or standards that do not promote a talent-rich, ready-to-work community.
 6. Work with the Agency for Workforce Innovation, businesses, Centers of Excellence, Employ Florida Banner Centers and other Florida research and market intelligence providers to: access new talent markets; market and communicate in the cultural context of changing talent; and develop expertise in regional, cultural, lifestyle, and age niches.
 7. Make a commitment to access the perspectives and aspirations of youth. This will help shape program marketing, communications of success, and approaches to program delivery.
 8. Assess what infrastructure, distance, and information gaps need to be bridged or eliminated to better tap into value niche talent markets including rural markets, juvenile justice programs, senior Floridians, and “under 30s,” all of which often require customized strategies. Other key talent groups worth noting as they are also a priority for Florida’s workforce system include: laid-off workers, workers with limited English proficiency, disabled workers, teen parents, veterans, military spouses, youth aging out of foster care, people transitioning off welfare and displaced homemakers.
 9. Work with Florida’s leaders to ensure: business intelligence on talent is fully utilized in setting policy; an ever-improving talent message is being promoted in key global markets; and all state-level partners are in agreement on critical talent benchmarks and milestones.
 10. Work with all partners, policymakers, and key agencies to promote success, ensure appropriate private and public financial support, develop college-to-college governance strategies, and communicate milestone successes.



Workforce Florida Governance

The Governor serves as a member of the Workforce Florida Board of Directors and appoints all of its private-sector members. By law, the chairman of Workforce Florida must come from private-sector business and business leaders must make up a majority of the members. In 2006-2007, Workforce Florida began to internally restructure its councils and committees aimed at responding more strategically to workforce needs by creating a new structure that better reflects business demands, best practices, strategic imperatives and new initiatives funded by the Florida Legislature and the federal government. The previous structure was created by the law in 2000, and, among other things, established three councils—First Jobs/First Wages, Better Jobs/Better Wages and High Skills/High Wages. Those councils now have been revamped into three new panels—the Business Competitiveness Council, Career Council and Youth Development Council—though they carry similar policy responsibilities as their predecessor councils. Briefly, the charge of the Business Competitiveness Council is to address the workforce needs of business and industry to advance the state economy. The Career Council seeks to address the needs of all job seekers with a primary focus on lifelong learning and constant improvement of employed workers’ skills. The Career Council oversees access to workforce services, while also leading policy initiatives to support special groups such as the homeless, veterans, laid-off workers, displaced homemakers, people with disabilities, teen parents, military spouses, people transitioning off welfare and mature workers, among others. This council develops policy initiatives to guide skills upgrade training and occupation-specific training in consultation with both employees and their employers. The goal is to help employees retain their jobs, boost their earnings and advance in the workforce. These goals are vital to the success of every worker in Florida and are especially critical to those families who are seeking to build economic independence. When we are successful at doing so, we help employers reduce costly turnover, improve productivity and create additional jobs. The Youth Development Council serves as the coordinating panel for youth initiatives designed to help Florida’s youth enter and advance in the workforce through learning, training and earning opportunities. The goals of the Youth Development Council include: increasing the number of high school graduates; increasing the number of youth who obtain a job that provides a



living wage; encouraging statewide employer/agency collaborations that help first-time workers enter and advance in the workplace. As Workforce Florida directs its attention to the priorities generated by the 2007 workforce forums, its governance structure is expected to continue to evolve. As it does, Workforce Florida will focus on three overarching objectives, as identified by Workforce Florida's new president and supported by workforce and strategic partners. These focal points are:

- **Policy Recommendations**
- **Resource Allocation**
- **Oversight/Business of Workforce Services Delivery**

It's anticipated that Workforce Florida's new strategic and operational plans will be built from these foundational objectives, as it continues to seek market-driven solutions to meet current and future workforce demands through collaborative efforts among workforce, education and economic development/industry partners. Workforce Florida's key workforce partners—the Agency for Workforce Innovation and the 24 Regional Workforce Boards and their nearly 100 one-stop centers—are especially vital to efforts to meet Florida's workforce challenges.



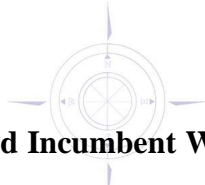
Some Key Initiatives At-a-Glance

In addition to its leadership and investment in Okaloosa County CHOICE-model career academies and Employ Florida Banner Centers, Workforce Florida's toolkit for advancing economic development priorities through workforce resources and services includes:

Business Employment Solutions and Training (BEST). Launched in 2005, BEST is a competitive grant program that fosters innovation by providing additional training dollars for Regional Workforce Boards that create programs to meet the skilled worker demands in local target industries. These programs are directed to employed, unemployed and underemployed workers who need to build their skills. Some of the local BEST initiatives have focused on special groups such as disabled job seekers, high school dropouts, homeless people, juvenile offenders, teens and people transitioning from public assistance to self sufficiency.

Employ Florida. All of Florida's workforce services are now connected through the Employ Florida network. That means the customer needs to only remember one name—Employ Florida—to find any of the network members anywhere in the state. Customers can call the Employ Florida toll-free number 1-866-FLA-2345 or go to the website at EmployFlorida.com. Either route connects customers with contact information for local one-stops, Regional Workforce Boards, Workforce Florida, the Agency for Workforce Innovation as well as many other local and state-level workforce resources including the Employ Florida Marketplace.

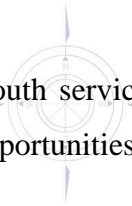
Employ Florida Marketplace. The Employ Florida Marketplace is Florida's powerful online self-service labor market exchange tool designed to help employers and job seekers connect. A "virtual" online one-stop for employment and training resources the Employ Florida Marketplace also offers employers the option of using Florida's local workforce professionals to personally assist them. More than 3 million individuals and 162,000 employers are registered on the Employ Florida Marketplace with daily traffic exceeding almost 48,000 unique visitors. The Employ Florida Marketplace is also used as a case management system by all of Florida's local workforce regions and their one-stop center staff enabling them to efficiently and proactively assist job seekers and employers.



Quick Response Training (QRT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). Both of these grant programs are administered by Workforce Florida. Working closely with Regional Workforce Boards, Enterprise Florida and local economic development councils—with special outreach to rural and distressed communities—Workforce Florida awards grants to businesses to cover some of the expenses associated with upgrading workers' skills. Businesses of all sizes tap into these resources. These programs, recognized for their low administrative overhead and lack of red-tape requirements, require businesses to invest matching money in training. Worth noting is that QRT grants are awarded to businesses with plans to start operations in the state and existing Florida companies that are expanding—in both cases resulting in the creation of new jobs. IWT was designed to help established businesses maintain a competitive workforce. During the 2006-2007 fiscal year, \$11.4 million in QRT grants were awarded to train more than 11,200 people, with businesses investing more than \$218.5 million; more than \$5.8 million in IWT grants were awarded to train 18,700 employees, with businesses contributing \$44.5 million. In fact, in August 2007 a leading national business magazine, *Expansion Management*, announced Florida was ranked No. 3 in the nation in its annual poll of states with the best workforce training programs, as determined by site selection experts. Quick Response Training, Incumbent Worker Training and the smaller, but similar, locally administered program Employed Worker Training were all highlighted in the publication.

Strengthening Youth Partnerships (SYP). Workforce Florida initiated this statewide effort in 2003 to increase coordination, planning and resource alignment among state organizations and agencies with complementary youth goals and missions. This group includes representatives from the departments of Juvenile Justice, Education, Children and Families, and Health along with Workforce Florida, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, Regional Workforce Boards, Associated Industries of Florida, Able Trust and others. It meets regularly to identify gaps in services, potential program duplication, and strategies to improve services to Florida's most at-risk youth. The partnership's work is aligned with more recent federal directives through the Employment and Training Administration (New Youth Vision) and the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth (Shared Youth Vision), among others, aimed at fostering more





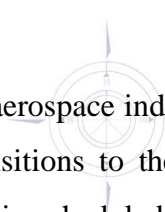
collaboration among those supporting youth services. Key to the visions of both the state and federal partners is increasing training opportunities for young people in high-growth industries that pay higher wages.



What's Ahead—Challenges and Opportunities

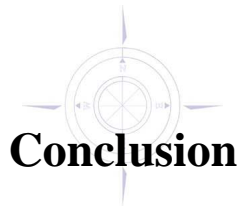
Florida's workforce system has a proven record of flexibility and responsiveness to the changing demands of the state's business climate. Still, the challenges remain great as Florida moves toward becoming the third-largest state in the nation by 2011, surpassing New York, and following California and Texas. A few of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead are highlighted here.

Workforce Funding. Florida continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation (4.3 percent in November 2007), but that rate also is continuing to increase. In the tight labor market that Florida has experienced with unemployment consistently below the national average (4.7 percent in November 2007), attracting and retaining talent has been a major challenge for many Florida businesses. If Florida is to maintain a competitive edge in this new economy then it will need more and better skilled talent to drive economic success for workers and businesses alike. Florida's current labor force numbers more than 9 million. The employment and training services and resources offered to businesses and individuals through Florida's workforce system are funded mostly from federal sources, but those funds are declining annually. Consider that in 2003-2004, Florida received \$310.5 million for workforce services from the federal government. The annual amount has continued to drop during the past five years and in 2007-2008 totaled \$248 million—a 20-percent decrease. While most of the federal funding passes through the state entities to be deployed by Regional Workforce Boards to meet their communities' unique workforce needs. Workforce Florida does direct state set-aside funding to target economic development priorities through initiatives such as Employ Florida Banner Centers, BEST and CHOICE as well as to respond to economic emergencies. Through Workforce Florida's policy-setting role it ensures federal and state dollars are invested in training that supports industries that help diversify the state's economy. Meanwhile, the trend of dwindling funding is increasingly shifting more attention to the need for new revenue sources to meet workforce training demands. This reality is helping to drive Workforce Florida's focus as noted above on resource acquisition, including its ongoing efforts to leverage private-sector dollars, to support the talent development needs in Florida.



Space Shuttle Transition. Florida's aerospace industry will undergo a major transformation when the space shuttle program transitions to the new Crew Exploration Vehicle (CEV) program. The space shuttle program is scheduled to be phased out by 2011 with the first Crew Exploration Vehicle mission set for 2014. This historic transition in the nation's space program also will create wide-ranging workforce challenges and opportunities in Florida, affecting not just the thousands of aerospace industry workers in the state, but those in other sectors that are linked to this state industry. Workforce Florida and its workforce partners have begun working with Space Florida Inc. to develop solutions to ensure that workers receive new training that will enable them to transition to the future space exploration program. Additionally, as a smaller workforce is anticipated for the new space program resulting from technology efficiencies gained, attention also is being focused on strategies for training workers to effectively transition to other high-value industries in the state. These workforce solutions are critical to maintaining Florida's strong aerospace industry and boosting the state economy by attracting new space-related businesses to the state.

Energy and Water Resources. The state's population growth will continue to constrain Florida's ability to provide power and water resources (potable water, wastewater disposal) for businesses and residents. Florida is currently the third-largest consumer of energy in the United States. The water/wastewater and energy sectors are foundational to the optimum operations of every industry in our state, and ensure the security and comfort of the citizenry. The droughts of 2006 and 2007 will likely continue into 2008. that is equipped to seize upon opportunities created through renewable energy sources. The state also is forging ahead as a leader in seeking solutions to diversify its energy resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile both the water resources and energy sectors are experiencing the graying of their workforces with half of their workers expected to retire in the next five years. Fewer recruits are in the pipeline to take their places. Simultaneously, existing energy facilities and transmission/distribution systems will need to be maintained and retrofitted to improve emissions to new standards, and new facilities and energy infrastructure will need to be constructed to support the growing demands of consumers and businesses throughout the state.



Conclusion

As noted in a special Workforce Florida report published in the spring of 2007, the challenges ahead also represent opportunities for Florida and its workforce system. The talent needs of Florida businesses and the trend of declining funding continue to propel the system to look for untapped resources while leveraging limited funds in new and creative ways. Through its sustaining values such as business-focus, business-informed, accountability and flexibility, Workforce Florida will continue to lead the way toward delivering world-class talent, strengthening the state's economy and improving the economic prosperity of its businesses and workforce.

More information about Workforce Florida is available at www.WorkforceFlorida.com and in the following publications:

>>> *Re-iMagine: Creating a Workforce for Florida's Future: 2005-2010 Strategic Plan*

>>> *Vision Innovation and Action: A Look at Florida's Workforce Success, A Special Report 2000-2007*

>>> *Delivering Demand-Driven Solutions for Florida, 2006-2007 Annual Report*

