

Workforce Florida, Inc.
Chris Hart IV, President/CEO

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Workforce Florida Inc. Supports Construction Industry Resurgence through Grant Aimed to Promote and Facilitate Worker Safety

FORT MYERS – Recognizing an opportunity to help get construction workers back to work in Florida and to bolster the industrial sub-sector of the construction industry – possibly poised for a resurgence due to infrastructure projects funded by stimulus dollars – Workforce Florida Inc. has awarded \$336,499 to the U.S. Safety Inc. Consortium.

The grant – an Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Grant funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) dollars – will enable the Consortium to provide safety training in English and Spanish for nearly 180 employees – mostly light commercial and residential construction workers looking to add to their skills – during its first class on Aug. 28. Additional trainees, who are not part of the grant, but whose duties place them on or near infrastructure projects will also attend the class and their numbers are expected to push the total attendance well over 200. The grant will also cover safety training for more than 1,000 additional workers who will take the course during subsequent sessions.

“Because of this grant, more than 1,200 Florida construction workers will enhance their professional skills and value, while increasing the value of their contributions to their employer’s success and the State’s economy,” said Frank Subzda, Administrator of the Consortium. “The Consortium’s goals are in alignment with Workforce Florida’s goal to develop and increase talent in our state – safety issues are imperative to reaching this goal within the construction sector.”

From entry-level to seasoned workers, all sub-sectors in the construction industry require basic safety skills. However, those workers on infrastructure sites face enhanced challenges such as working at increased heights that are potentially over water and around larger more hazardous equipment while working near busy roadways. The additional safety training for construction workers who make the transfer from residential or light commercial work to infrastructure projects is necessary to significantly reduce work-related injuries and deaths.

The funds granted to the U.S. Safety Consortium represent one way Workforce is working to shore up Florida’s construction industry. Another Workforce Florida-funded, construction-boosting initiative – still in its infancy and yet to be named – leverages a partnership between Workforce Florida and at least one major stakeholder in Florida’s construction industry to get unemployed construction workers back to work by creating an online hub designed to connect Florida construction companies to ARRA-funded

construction jobs. This year, Workforce Florida will award more than \$1 million to strengthen the state's construction industry, part of the Southeastern U.S. region known as the "breadbasket of craft labor."

"Construction is a key sector in Florida's economy and is vital to our state's economy and way of life, and the safety of our construction workers is fundamental to cultivating and preserving the talent we need to rejuvenate and support the industry," said Chris Hart IV, President/CEO of Workforce Florida. "I am proud of Workforce Florida's efforts through this grant as well as other initiatives to bolster the construction industry overall, and the industrial construction sub-sector in particular."

By law, \$2 million is set aside annually to fund the IWT program. However, the program received an additional \$2 million in ARRA funds this year, making \$4 million available to Florida businesses in the current fiscal year. The ARRA encourages consortiums to apply for funds set aside for IWT and gives priority to companies that need to train workers to avoid immediate layoffs.

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About Workforce Florida Inc.

Workforce Florida 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 Incumbent Worker Training Grants

Established in 1999, IWT Grants have provided funds to support customized training for almost 93,000 employees for nearly 900 businesses throughout the state. A major component of Workforce Florida's talent-development strategy, IWT reimburses businesses for a portion of their customized training costs for employees and supports businesses' needs to upgrade the skills of their existing workforce. According to the Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program, IWT participants saw a 23-percent increase in wages one year after completing training.

About the U.S. Safety Consortium

Headquartered in Fort Myers, the U.S. Safety Consortium is comprised of construction companies and suppliers from all over Florida. Organized in 2009, the Consortium's mission mirrors that of its lead partner, U.S. Safety, which is to ensure that "everybody goes home in the same condition they came to work."

Workforce Florida is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.