



# The Florida Workforce System's 2007 Regional Forums: Conversations on Designing the Future and Delivering Better Solutions for Talent and Business

Session Notes Forum #3  
September 5, 2007

Orlando  
Orlando Airport Marriott

Florida's workforce system has been charged with convening regional conversations about talent, careers, business partnerships, and opportunities for improvement in workforce processes. In order to access the opinions and ideas in Florida's diverse regional markets, Workforce Florida, in partnership with the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) and the Florida Workforce Development Association, has launched regional conversations in six markets, including: Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tallahassee, Destin, and Sarasota. In order to draw on the perceptions and knowledge of private and public sector leaders and stakeholders, Workforce Florida has asked Fairfield Index, Inc., a company focused on helping markets and businesses become more competitive, to: frame regional agendas; draw on the experience and skills in every Forum; utilize electronic polling to focus conversations; and provide third-party Forum Session Notes.

In its "call for Forum participation," Workforce Florida recognized these key areas for discussion:

- To compete, Florida must cultivate and sustain our reputation for great talent and great talent delivery systems.
- The global economy is changing and Floridians of all ages are seeking to tap into great careers, great income and lifelong learning.
- Businesses demand the best in workforce partnerships, responsiveness and long-term relationships.
- Partner organizations and citizens want an update on innovation in Florida's workforce delivery system.

## Conversation Jump-starters for Orlando Forum

### Part 1: Workforce System Historical Overview

**Ray Gilley** – President of the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission; and an inaugural Board member and past Chairman of Workforce Florida, Inc.

### Part 2: Workforce Development Experts Panel

**Gary Earl** – President of Workforce Central Florida, Inc.  
**Belinda Keiser** – Vice Chair of Workforce Florida, Inc.; and Vice Chancellor of Community Relations and Student Achievement for Keiser University

### Part 3: Business and Economic Development Experts Panel

**Randy Berridge** – President of the Florida High Tech Corridor Council  
**Al Latimer** – Vice President of External Affairs, Enterprise Florida, Inc.

**William "Bill" McDermott, CEcD** – Director of the Seminole County Economic Development Department

### Part 4: AWI Perspective

**Monesia Taylor Brown** – Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI); and Workforce Florida, Inc. Board member

## SUMMARY

Forum participants in Orlando, with the help of jump-starter panelists, invested three hours in the discussion of: history and legacy; changing markets; engagement of private sector leaders and business intelligence; and opportunities for the future. Electronic polling tools helped participants share perceptions about Florida's assets and competitiveness, and define the strengths of public-private partnerships like Workforce Florida.

As a result, the Forum produced an outline for incremental improvement, with special focus on marketing and communications, and ensuring that economic development and workforce activities are seamless.

Panelist Ray Gilley's summary of how and why the workforce system was reinvented through the Workforce Innovation Act included recognition of the faithfulness of local and state leaders to both the public-private movement and the complexities of managing a top-notch workforce delivery system. He linked the success of Workforce Florida to the engagement of business, measurement of success, and flexibility. He also indicated no major overhauls are required, just a focus on execution and growing the ever increasing base of business partners. Forum attendees were generally in agreement with these positions.

## RESULTS

Forum participants saw the existing public-private system as fundamentally sound, with a great Central Florida network of business, not-for-profit and volunteer partners. The greatest risks lie in failure to fully utilize the resources of business and leaving some businesses unaware of key programs and products. The relationship between economic development and workforce development teams is productive, and plays a direct role in producing the region's competitive messages, business mentoring, and education strategies. Agenda items for the future were generally focused on incremental change and continuous improvement.

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The scale and complexities of the workforce delivery system is a top challenge



Recognize the scale and complexities of the workforce delivery system require dedicated and knowledgeable business partners and volunteers. Communicate agendas, identify milestones, and continuously encourage business engagement. In the past and over long periods of time, committed Floridians have invested time and resources in the public-private platform. Their legacy matters, as does the commitment of new leaders.

Find new ways to attract private sector leaders



Experiment with and develop new ways to attract and inform private sector leaders. Share best practices in business engagement and leadership on projects and in local board engagement.

Ensure that K-12 education system is relevant



With unique and lasting access to business intelligence, employers of all sectors, and market forecasts, Workforce Florida is in the best position to inform educators about careers of the future.

Market great programs and products



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.

Thinking and operating as a region matters



Central Florida's economy and workforce crosses many jurisdictions. Though many businesses operate on a local or community level, always remember that talent and competitiveness are usually measured on a regional basis. Operate with respect to people who travel great distances to access careers, and companies that depend on access to talent pools in multiple counties for multiple sites.

Seek the efficiencies and power of communications alignment



In their extreme, autonomy and independence create conflict in the messages that are sent to fiduciaries, businesses, and markets. Improve the process used to launch information policy, programs, and products among all partners in the workforce delivery system. Avoid duplication when possible. Most important, develop a way to track developments in communications and marketing so that, prior to launch, messages are aligned and any risk of confusion in the market is eliminated.

Build on the great workforce and economic development partnership



Always support a "seamless" relationship among economic development organizations, Workforce Florida, AWI and local workforce boards. This is not a static situation because businesses are changing, the global economy is changing, and the demands of new and existing businesses vary by sector or function. When new business opportunities emerge – such as business location or expansion activities – customer response time and accuracy matter. AWI is a critical player in providing up-to-date and responsive data.

## IMPROVEMENTS AND EMERGING ISSUES

Forum attendees were asked where they saw opportunities for additional improvement or need to watch or respond to emerging issues. As a result, the following items were identified:

**ISSUE** – Workforce delivery is an extremely complex activity/discipline for Florida's future.

**ACTION** – Inspiring and involving even more business leaders to engage for the long-term in the details of the discipline is required.

**ISSUE** – Florida's demographics are changing.

**ACTION** – Work with AWI, businesses, Centers of Excellence, 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.

**ISSUE** – Some risk for mixed messages and conflicting communications.

**ACTION** – Ensure communications and marketing on every aspect of the workforce delivery system, including policy, compliance, trends, products and services, are aligned.

**ISSUE** – Are we confident that businesses are fully aware of all products and services?

**ACTION** – Evaluate whether marketing programs reach all key targets, restage as needed, and measure business usage and penetration.

**KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM ELECTRONIC POLLING PROCESS**

- **Top Values of a Public-Private Enterprise**

When considering the top values of a public-private enterprise, Forum attendees provided the following, diversified responses:

Speed in Solving Problems	1%
Ability to Reinvent Itself with Changing Markets and Situations	30%
Connection to Private Sector Leaders and Experts	11%
Culture of Customer Service	4%
Business-like Focus on Measures and Milestones	9%
Accountability among its Leaders and Employees	0%
Relevance of Services and Programs to Needs	26%
Private Sector Dollars	5%
Marshalling Resources for the Common Vision	13%
Other	1%

Participants were confronted with the opportunity to pick only one top value. In this case, the top three choices reflected the general confidence of the Forum in public-private enterprises to respond to changing conditions such as global markets, business goals and metrics management, connections with real business trends, and utilization of private sector knowledge.

- **Florida’s Competitive Assets – Now and Future**

Forum participants were asked to identify Florida’s most competitive asset. Participants leaned heavily towards Florida’s global location as a top asset, but made a radical break to talent, education and business when asked which options SHOULD be the top asset in a global economy.

<b>What is Florida’s Most Competitive Asset?</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Should Be</b>
Its Cost of Doing Business	15%	8%
Its Government	0%	1%
Its Education Systems and Centers of Excellence	18%	37%
Its Products	0%	0%
Its Hard Infrastructure	1%	0%
Its Businesses and Industries	5%	11%
Its Capital Investments	0%	1%
Its Talent	12%	38%
Its Regional and Global Location	45%	4%
Other	4%	0%

**Question:** What made the break from location to talent, education and business a possibility for the attendees at the Orlando Forum?

**Answer:** Workforce Florida takes a lead role in making K-12 relevant, continuously drives to a seamless relationship with economic developers and their organizations, and inspires business leaders to engage and thrive in the discipline of workforce delivery.