



PARTNERS' REPORT

March 2001

Workforce Florida Defines Vision, Sets Direction

Board sets stage for adoption of state strategic plan

Workforce leaders met in January to define the strategic vision and goals for Florida's newly integrated workforce system. Workforce Florida oversees 24 regional workforce boards with responsibility for more than 170 one-stop career centers. More than 80 partners and stakeholders participated in the two-day WFI Board vision and strategy session held in Orlando, which was followed by a meeting of the State Board.

WFI Chairman Toni Jennings, architect of the state's pacesetting welfare reform legislation and a catalyst in the creation of the Workforce Innovation Act of 2000, opened the session by congratulating the board for what they have achieved so far — and challenging them to help develop the strategic blueprint from which to build a world class workforce. *(Continues on page 2)*

Florida Awarded \$21 Million for Welfare Reform Performance

Florida was one of 28 states recognized recently for welfare reform performance, receiving nearly \$21 million out of \$200 million in bonuses awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“Florida continues to set the national pace in welfare reform,” said Toni Jennings, chairman of Workforce Florida and architect of the 1996 state welfare reform legislation. “Thousands of individuals are trading welfare for work and a better future. What a privilege it is to be a part of this revolution.”

The bonuses were established in 1996 as part of the federal welfare reform law. States compete in four categories, of

which two are based on how many welfare recipients the state places in jobs that year and how many kept those jobs. The other two track improvements in these categories. Florida received \$6.8 million last year as the state reporting the biggest gains in job retention and earnings.

Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia competed for the awards. Florida was ranked 10th overall in two categories:

- Percentage of welfare recipients placed in jobs in 1998 and 1999.
- Success in helping welfare recipients keep jobs and increase earnings.

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Special Report

WFI delivers on goal to create 3,000 training and employment opportunities in its first six months of operation.

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WFI Submits Strategic Blueprint to Build A World Class Workforce

(Continued from page 1)

Workforce leaders discussed goals and strategies for Florida's Strategic Workforce Plan, which was approved by the Board on January 25 and submitted to the Governor on February 1, 2001. Workforce staff had worked with WFI Board Councils and partners throughout the fall to develop a portrait of Florida's workforce challenges and opportunities, as well as preliminary goals and strategies. That groundwork laid the foundation for the leadership dialogue and action in Orlando, and the refinement and adoption of final goals and strategies.

Florida's Strategic Workforce Plan outlines goals and strategies for targeted workforce initiatives addressing first jobs, better jobs and high skill/high wage occupations. The plan also includes strategic direction on cross-functional initiatives such as performance tracking, workforce marketing, and information technology.

Board leaders repeatedly emphasized the need to keep the customer front and center and make the workforce system truly responsive to business. "The vision needs to be reflected from the state right down to the street corner where the customer comes for service," said WFI Board member and educator Dr. Bill Maloy. "We need to establish high expectations and make sure those expectations are explicit in contracts with service providers." That emphasis on the customer and ensuring quality at the point

where job seekers and employers first interact with the workforce system was one of the resounding themes coming out of the strategic planning caucuses, which shared recommendations from their respective groups during the two-day event.

That led to discussions about how Florida evaluates its workforce system and services, and the need for board members to understand and then provide leadership in this area. "We want a one-stop (workforce) system second to none," said Ray Gilley, Florida Power executive and WFI Board member. "How are we evaluating that system?" Caucus members recommended further study of the issue and suggested that WFI develop a board orientation process that includes site visits to regional boards and local one-stop career centers.

This is a living document and it represents a strong foundation – but it is only a foundation," said Jennings. "Action plans must produce the desired results, or we will adjust the course to achieve our vision of a globally competitive workforce."

Those issues are among the topics that will be taken up by a strategic planning subcommittee that WFI Chairman Jennings is forming to further develop strategies and monitor progress toward achieving goals.

A copy of the Plan is available on our website at: www.workforceflorida.com.

Training Florida's Workforce

Florida's *Quick Response Training Program* provides training grants to new or expanding businesses that produce an exportable product or service. So far this fiscal year, grants have helped 33 companies train 9,336 workers for new high skill/high wage jobs at an average cost of \$674 per trainee. The program's \$6-million appropriation has been committed, with 29% of all projects located in rural areas, brownfields or enterprise zones. Employers have matched the state's investment with more than \$40 million to train these same employees.

Florida's *Incumbent Worker Training Program*, which provides training to support job retention, is marketed predominantly to small businesses. The state has author-

ized annual expenditures of \$2 million, and Workforce Florida has allocated an additional \$800,000 to meet employer needs. Progress this fiscal year includes the

America's Career Kit Team Wins Prestigious Hammer Award

Florida workforce executives were recognized recently for their contributions in creating a national Internet-based job bank and career portal.

Linda South, executive director of the Brevard Workforce Development Board, and Garry Breedlove, Economic Analyst with the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), were part of a 30-member national leadership team awarded the prestigious Hammer Award in December in Washington.

The Hammer Award is presented to teams of government employees who have made significant contributions in support of reinventing government. More than 1,200 Hammer Awards have been presented to government teams who are working to build a better government.

America's Career Kit is a value-packed, Internet toolkit consisting of America's Job Bank, America's Learning Exchange, and America's Career InfoNet. Sponsored by the US Department of Labor, the kit is available to job seekers and employers online at no charge.

America's Job Bank (AJB)

Provides employers with rapid, national exposure for their job listings, and a portal to the nation's job service and One-Stop offices. AJB lets job seekers post their resumes and apply for jobs anywhere in the U.S. by directly contacting employers. Currently, AJB has more than 1.4 million active job listings.

On-line at: www.ajb.dni.us

America's Learning Exchange (ALX).

Connects users to career development and training resources, including on-line courses, seminars and materials designed to enhance a person's knowledge and marketability. On-line at: www.alx.org

America's Career InfoNET (ACINet)

Provides occupational and employment market data, including information on wages, employment growth and demographics at the local, state and national levels. On-line at: www.acinet.org/acinet/

WORKFORCE BRIEFS

Florida Leads the Nation in Job Growth

Florida continues to set the national pace in workforce development. The state leads the nation's 10 largest states in job growth and welfare caseload declines, and ranks second (behind California) in the number of new jobs added. The state also is becoming a prominent player in the high-technology arena, ranking 4th nationally in high-tech employment growth and 6th overall in total high-tech employment.

Information Technology – Workforce Integrated Information System

At the November 2000 state board meeting, the State Technology Office (STO) presented a proposed budget and recommendations for launching a much needed workforce integrated information system mandated by legislation. The board adopted the STO recommendations and directed the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) to proceed. A two-day strategic planning session is scheduled for March 6-7 in Tallahassee to begin dialogue with stakeholders and develop a strategic plan that will guide the development and implementation of this system. For more information and updates, visit the Partners' Section of our website at: www.workforceflorida.com.

Labor Market Info Online

The Agency for Workforce Innovation recently unveiled a labor market internet database that allows businesses, job seekers and economic development professionals to access state labor market information. Users can develop and print customized reports with information on wage and unemployment rates and current workforce, and compare data on a county or regional basis. FRED, as the system is affectionately known, resides at www.labormarketinfo.com.

“Special Report on Chairman’s Challenge”

WFI Meets Ambitious Challenge to Create 3,000 Training and Job Opportunities in First Six Months of Operation

In a report to Governor Bush on March 1, WFI Chairman Toni Jennings announced that Workforce Florida had exceeded the ambitious goal set in August of last year to train 2,000 adults for better jobs and find unsubsidized jobs for another 1,000 young workers within six months. This significant “down payment” by WFI demonstrates that Florida’s newly integrated workforce system is indeed responsive and results-oriented.

The new Board worked with its councils and regional workforce partners throughout the fall and spring to devise and implement strategies to meet the Challenge by Chairman Jennings. Details of the Challenge to and response from each Council are provided separately in this report.



Preliminary Tally of Achievements by Council

High Skills/High Wages Council:

Grants awarded:	10
People trained:	1,670
IT certifications:	1,383
Avg. est. cost per person trained:	\$2,424
State Investment:	\$3.9 million
Funds Leveraged:	\$2.3 million

IT certifications included:

- Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS)
- A+
- AutoCAD (Computer Assisted Design)
- Microsoft 2000
- Cisco Certified Network Administrator (CCNA)
- Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE)

First Jobs/First Wages Council:

Job placements:	409
Job opportunities:	642
Youth hiring commitments:	2,042
Job opportunities identified:	2,140
Youth enrolled in work readiness activities:	2,035
State investment:	\$0.5 million

Better Jobs/Better Wages Council:

Former welfare recipients trained:	1,010
(all currently employed)	
Avg. est. cost per person trained:	\$4,950
State Investment:	\$5 million

Training programs included:

- Office Systems Technology
- Registered Nurse/LPN
- Computer Programming
- Dental Assistant/Hygienist
- Pharmacy Technology
- Culinary Arts
- Tractor/Trailer Operator
- Auto Mechanics
- Criminal Justice, Paralegal
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Childhood Development
- Accounting Technology
- Paralegal

High Skills/High Wages Council Exceeds Training Challenge

The Challenge

Rapidly train and certify at least 1,000 information technology professionals by March 1, 2001.

The Results

The Council chose to use its entire \$4-million allotment for the purpose of the IT grant challenge. Through a competitive process that emphasized public and private-sector leveraging, and an ability to meet aggressive time frames, the 10 top proposals were funded. Nearly half of Florida's counties were represented in the funded proposals.

Demand for IT training in Florida is extraordinary. All 24 Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) submitted proposals, requesting a total of \$15.2 million to train over 5,200 people.

Although final results are still being tabulated, these efforts are expected to produce 1,670 trained workers with about 1,383 certifications at a cost of approximately \$2,424 per trainee.

About \$2.3 million in cash and in-kind contributions was leveraged by participating training providers and businesses. This enabled the Council to stretch its initial project allocation of \$4 million in WIA funds by nearly 60 percent.

Because information technology (IT) training needs cut across industry type, a wide variety of employers participated in this effort, including: state and local governments, call centers, hospitals, construction companies and manufacturers. The awards themselves generated numerous certifications, including Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS), A+, AutoCAD (computer assisted design), Microsoft 2000, Cisco Certified Network Administrator (CCNA), and Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE). These certification categories accounted for almost 75 percent of the total certifications obtained by trainees.

Business and Client Perspectives

"This grant was an opportunity of a lifetime for my company and field engineers. Our people are the best of the best, and this gave them an opportunity to further their education to get to the next level."

Mona Hilton, President
Genesis Computer Solutions
Online Technology, Ft. Myers

"This represents a great example of our ability to strengthen the critical linkage between workforce and economic development efforts to grow our state's economy. Our Council looks forward to building on the successful experience."

—Ray Gilley, Council Chair

"The A+ training with Family Computer USA has given me a better understanding of what makes computers tick." Mr. Hendricks further praised the flexibility of the short-term training given on evenings and weekends.

Charlie Hendricks, Service Center Technician
Naples Community Hospital

"The newly formed Lakeland Chamber Workforce Committee was very interested in the IT training grant and incumbent worker training. This committee will likely advocate for more funds for these types of projects given their popularity and success with the business community."

Nancy Thompson, Executive Director
Polk County Workforce Development Board

"We would participate again! We fully appreciate and support this opportunity. Now that we have four Microsoft Certified Professionals (MCP) employees, we would encourage and support them to continue work towards the MSCE."

Sharon Andre
Martin Memorial Hospital

"Our employee now has the knowledge to work on our computers, where before we would outsource it. This is an exceptional way for schooling while employed. We will definitely consider sending employees if the training opportunity arises again." Employee received A+ certification.

Bette Gordon
Southern Eagle Distributing, Inc.

"Thank you for giving our company such a valuable asset—knowledge. We sincerely appreciate it."

Sherry Terpening
Culpepper & Terpening

"I deeply appreciate being given this opportunity...this certificate (MCP) means a great deal to me, especially with the additional hard work that was needed to succeed."

Candy Wright, Computer Operations Administrator
Law Office of Phillip DeBerard

Better Jobs/Better Wages Council Provides 1,000+ Former Cash Assistance Recipients With Training and Job Advancement Opportunities

The Challenge

Rapidly train 1,000 former cash assistance recipients who are employed for advancement that allows them to become self-sufficient.

Develop a plan to use idle Welfare-to-Work (WtW) resources to significantly move Florida forward in the preparation of the skills and capabilities of those who can be served.

The Results

Through partnerships with local employers and education/training providers, former welfare transition clients will now have the opportunity to:

- Obtain employment in occupations related to their training/education after completing a course of study.
- Obtain a better position with their current employer after completing a course of study.
- Earn more after completing a course of study.
- Successfully complete a course and continue enrollment or obtain a certificate or degree.

To meet the first part of the challenge, the Council used a \$5-million allocation earmarked for Retention Incentive Training Accounts (RITAs) to further educate or train 1,010 working former welfare recipients. The opportunities offered to these individuals will help them become self-reliant and achieve self-sufficiency.

To meet the second part of the challenge, the WFI state board approved an initial \$5-million allocation for "Step-Up Challenge Grants" and issued a first round of competitive Requests for Proposal (RFPs) last fall. Twelve proposals were funded for a total of approximately \$1.2 million. The second round of solicitations for applications, issued in mid-January, offered up to \$1 million for local partnership proposals that included local matching funds, and invited post-secondary educational institutions and associations of training providers to participate. Proposals are currently being evaluated.

Business and Client Perspectives

When her son graduated from high school, Lucilla's friends persuaded her it was time to open a business and sell the special cakes that had been the highlight of family celebrations and charity events for years. Today, SWEET ART BY LUCILLA employs more than 50 workers in two bakeries, South Miami and the Falls area.

"During the initial weeks, the challenge energized and focused our council on working with regional workforce boards to successfully meet the goal. With those critical partnerships and communication processes in place, we are well positioned to move forward and continue to work with the regions in implementing the elements of our strategic plan."

-Carolyn Franz, Council Chair

After hiring her first welfare transition client over 3 years ago, Lucilla enjoys working with employees who work hard and want to learn whatever it takes to succeed. Elena, an employee and a former TANF recipient, is now attending school to learn the fine art of cake decorating, which will afford her the opportunity to move up from cashier to full-time baker. Lucilla says, "It is an advantage to me to have someone who

can work with customers and who can also create cakes that I will be proud to sell in my shop. I want my employees to feel like this is their business too."

Sweet Art by Lucilla

Cassie [not her real name], a 17-year resident of Sumter County, applied for cash assistance after her husband was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She was the sole provider for both her husband and two-year-old daughter. After assessment results and employment skills workshops, Cassie decided to attend the Health Institute for the Patient Care Assistant (PCA) program. She had always been interested in the nursing field, but lacked a high school degree. She enrolled in a local technical institute and obtained a GED while receiving transitional childcare and transportation support.

Cassie was hired to work at an Assisted Living Facility earning \$7 per hour and worked there until an opportunity opened up at a local hospital. She has since been accepted to the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program at the local community college and visited the One-Stop Career Center for a RITA. Once she becomes an LPN, her hospital salary will increase.

***—Submitted by
Citrus, Levy, Martin Regional Workforce Board
Region 10***

First Jobs/First Wages Council Succeeds in Creating Job Opportunities for Youth

The Challenge

Devise and implement a strategy to move 1,000 young people into unsubsidized jobs by March 2001.

The Results

The Council developed a three-pronged approach to meeting the challenge:

- Provide funds to regional youth councils to emphasize younger workers.
- Partner with the business community to highlight youth employment and obtain hiring commitments.
- Convene a youth summit to showcase the achievements of regional youth efforts and the employers who answered the call, and to chart plans for the future.

To jump-start youth employment offers, a one-time grant of up to \$25,000 was made available to each of Florida's 24 regional workforce boards (RWBs). To receive the grant, RWBs had to describe their plans for improving linkages to local businesses and strengthening community youth programs and services, and then report results. Reports from the 22 RWBs receiving grants indicate that the strategy worked: **409** young people have been placed in jobs and another **642** are projected to gain employment by the end of the project period.

As a result of youth recruitment and job fairs, RWBs report enrolling **2,035** young people into work-readiness activities, such as job experience and employability skills seminars. Increased efforts to partner with businesses yielded 2,042 hiring commitments and an additional 2,140 job opportunities.

In all, regions reported that over 4,000 young people participated in some employment activity since the challenge was issued. Additional job fairs and related activities are being currently be planned.

A Youth Summit this coming fall will showcase best practices from around the state, along with critical issues pertaining to youth and first-time workers.

Business and Client Perspectives

Susan [not her real name], a young mother, was recruited through the assistance of the food stamps rolls. When Susan was contacted, she was working part-time at a convenience store. Her limited income forced her to extend a temporary living situation.

Susan had lost her full-time job and car. Lacking transportation to her part-time job, she rented a room from her boyfriend's family within walking distance to her work. It was originally agreed that she would be able to rent the room for her daughter and herself, but conflicts arose. Susan had to leave her daughter in her mother's care until she could find better living arrangements. She was without her daughter and living on very limited funds.

When Susan was contacted and offered on-the-job training (OJT), she was eager to begin. An appointment was set and she arranged for transportation to the One-Stop Career Service Center. After completing the eligibility paperwork, Susan was sent on an interview with a local company and was hired to start the next week as a full-time secretary. She is now saving for a new car, renting her own home, and she has her daughter back.

"Regions aggressively engaged the business community to hire youth, and while the primary objective was employment, the real success story is the connections they made with employers. They helped them understand the importance of hiring and developing young people for career advancement that leads to self-sufficiency, and gained commitments for hiring over 2,000 young people."

—Cathy B. Martin, Council Chair

**—Submitted by
Citrus, Levy, Martin Regional Workforce Board
Region 10**

"Three chambers of commerce entered into an agreement with Workforce Central Florida (WCF) to develop a curriculum for and deliver training to at least 10% of their members. This training will concentrate on recruiting, hiring and retaining youth on the job. Seminars begin February 22 and will be completed by March 1, 2001. WCS will also be providing information at these seminars on the services available at One-Stop Centers, distributing an excellent reference book (Supervisor Savvy) to each employer in attendance, as well as following up after the seminar to further encourage youth hiring. The seminars are expected to draw up to 150 employers."

**—Submitted by
Workforce Central Florida
Region 12**

Calendar March –June 2001

March 6-7, 2001

**ONE-STOP MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION**

Atkins Building, Room 101
Koger Executive Center
Tallahassee, FL

March 20, 2001

REGIONAL WORKFORCE BOARDS TECHNOLOGY CONSORTIUM
Ft. Myers, FL

MARCH 21, 2001

PARTNERS MEETING

1:00–5:00 p.m.
Adam's Mark Hotel
Orlando, FL

March 22, 2001

**COUNCILS MEET CONCURRENTLY, 9:30–11:30
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE, 11:30-12:30
FULL BOARD MEETING, 12:30-4:00**

Adam's Mark Hotel
Orlando, FL

April 11, 2001

EXECUTIVE TELECONFERENCE

May 22-23, 2001

**PARTNERS MEETING
FULL BOARD MEETING**

Orlando, FL

June 13, 2001

EXECUTIVE TELECONFERENCE

Next Issue:

- ◆ Review of March Board Meeting Actions
- ◆ Legislative Update
- ◆ Fiscal Year 2001-2002 Budget Outlook

*For updates and agendas, visit us at:
www.workforceflorida.com*



325 John Knox Road
Building 200
Tallahassee, FL 32303

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