



PARTNERS' REPORT

And the *Agency for Workforce Innovation*

October 24, 2000

Workforce Florida and the Agency for Workforce Innovation are pleased to present the first in a series of reports to partners and stakeholders on progress in implementing Chapter 445, Florida Statutes, as created by the Workforce Innovation Act of 2000 (CS/SB 2050). Swift and steady progress has been made on several fronts since July 1, beginning with consolidation of state workforce and welfare reform programs into a single point of accountability, Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) and the appointment of the WFI State Board.

Following are highlights of progress and key initiatives, starting with a recap of the enabling legislation. We welcome your ideas and feedback as we move forward to implement meaningful reforms aimed at building a skilled workforce and a workforce training and education system that will be responsive to the needs of employers.

About the Workforce Innovation Act

Florida's **landmark legislation consolidated state workforce and welfare reform programs** to better serve the needs of employers and job seekers at all levels – from youth entering the workforce for the first time to workers needing specialized skills to fill coveted jobs in Florida's fast-growing technology sectors.

The Legislature created **Workforce Florida** from the Workforce Division of Enterprise Florida and the State WAGES (Work & Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency Board). Workforce Florida will serve as the state's **chief workforce policy organization with responsibility for measuring and reporting performance** of all workforce partners.

The non-profit corporation provides policy and oversight to Florida's 24 regional workforce boards and the Agency for Workforce

Innovation (AWI), which replaces the Department of Labor as the designated state agency for administering workforce programs, funding and personnel. AWI operates under a performance contract with Workforce Florida.

A key aim of the legislation is to align workforce development efforts with state economic development strategies. The integrated workforce system will **ensure that businesses can hire the work-ready employees they need** – and that all Floridians have the opportunity to upgrade their skills and obtain jobs that allow them to become economically self-sufficient. The change follows welfare caseload declines in Florida of more than 80 percent since 1996 which brought about a new challenge: helping former welfare recipients who have joined the ranks of the working poor train for better jobs with better wages.

Special points of interest

- Senator Jennings challenges new Board to find unsubsidized jobs for 1,000 youth and train another 2,000 Floridians for better paying jobs by March 2001.
- Board approves operating budget of \$2.9 million, redirecting more than one-third of last year's administrative budget to workforce programs — translating into savings of more than \$1.4 million.

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Workforce Florida Leadership

Governor Bush tapped Senate President **Toni Jennings**, a key architect in the creation of Florida's welfare reform and workforce legislation, to serve as charter chairman of Workforce Florida, Inc. The 45-member state board appointed by the Governor in July includes business leaders, along with representatives of organized labor, education and training, and government agencies who bring diverse perspectives to deliberations.

Curtis Austin, former president of the State Workforce Board, was named president of Workforce Florida. **Larry Champion** was named Board Treasurer.

Tom McGurk, former Secretary of the Department of Management Services, was selected by the Governor to head the Agency for Workforce Innovation. McGurk recently announced key appointments to the AWI team of **Lucy Hadi**, previous Staff Director for the Senate Committee on Fiscal Policy as Deputy Director for Workforce Services; **Suzanne Martin**, from the Florida Department of Education as Deputy Director for Workforce Information Services; and **Penny Jo Pagona**, from Virginia's Tidewater Community College as Deputy Director over Workforce Investment and Accountability.

Board Meets, Receives Marching Orders

The state board met for the first time in Tallahassee on Aug. 15 and again on Sept. 12, and enthusiastically accepted a **challenge from Chairman Jennings to develop strategies to train at least 3,000 Floridians for better paying jobs – from entry level to high skill -- by March 2001.** This tangible down payment underscores WFI's commitment to helping Florida develop the workforce infrastructure it needs to thrive and compete in the new economy.

Governor Bush addressed the new Board at its inaugural meeting and voiced his support for a unified workforce system.

As mandated by law, the WFI Board established three standing councils to develop targeted workforce strategies for:

First Jobs/First Wages—preparing students and first-time workers for jobs, including teen parents on welfare (chaired by **Catherine Martin** of Eckerd Youth Alternatives).

Better Jobs/Better Wages— assisting families transitioning from welfare and former welfare recipients working in low-wage jobs with limited mobility (chaired by **Carolyn Franz** of Siemens Corporation).

High Skills/High Wages—aligning education and training programs with high-paying, high demand jobs that advance

careers, build a more skilled workforce and enhance the state's efforts to attract and expand job-creating businesses (chaired by **Ray Gilley** of Florida Power Corporation).

The Board **approved an operating budget** of \$2.9 million, redirecting 33.78 percent of last year's administrative budget to workforce programs. The redirection trimmed staff from 46 to 33 persons (eliminating 6 full-time, 3 part-time and 4 contractual positions) with further reductions planned. This translates into **savings of more than \$1.4 million**, enough to fund training for more than 490 additional Floridians (based on an average training cost of \$3,000 per person).

The Board's first two meetings focused on organizational business necessary to consolidate state operations for greater efficiency, and performance reports on Florida's 24 workforce regions.

Additionally, the Board authorized staff to solicit proposals for Florida's **Step Up Challenge Grant** with up to \$5 million in welfare-to-work funds. Established by the Workforce Innovation Act this year, the grant program seeks to support projects that help current and former welfare recipients obtain the training and education they need to stay employed and advance in their careers by matching local investments with state funds.

Chairman Jennings challenged the Board to develop plans to train 3,000 Floridians for better paying jobs by March 2001.

Workforce Florida Working to Meet Legislative Mandates

Workforce Florida is conducting weekly meetings with representatives from the regional boards, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the State Technology Office and other state agencies to ensure steady progress and collaboration in addressing

legislative mandates. These working meetings are an opportunity to focus on key issues such as information technology and program improvement.

Annual Plans & Reports

Workforce Florida is meeting a number of legislative mandates for reports on workforce progress and a strategic plan that will be updated annually. These include:

Incumbent Worker Training Report, submitted in October (due annually thereafter) to the Legislature on the financial and general operations of the program.

Modifications to Five-Year State Workforce Investment Plan, Workforce Florida and the Agency for Workforce Innovation are finalizing modification #3, due Nov. 1 to the U. S. Department of Labor.

WIA Annual Report, due Nov. 15 to the U.S. Department of Labor.

WFI Annual Report, due annually each Dec. 1, to the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House which will include the **Report on 3 Tier Performance Measures**, also due Dec. 1 to the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House.

Plan for further Reorganizing and Reduction in Force, due prior to January 1, 2001, to the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House, in conjunction with the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

The State Strategic Workforce Plan, a comprehensive document outlining goals, priorities and strategies for the new integrated workforce system, due February 1, 2001, (and each Jan. 1 thereafter) to the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House.

Workforceflorida.com

Workforce Florida is developing an online gateway to workforce information at www.workforceflorida.com, in collaboration with AWI and [MYFLORIDA.com](http://www.myflorida.com).

The interim site for employers, job seekers, and workforce professionals and partners is a "work in progress" – but provides easy access to training and hiring incentives for businesses, while giving job seekers links to job banks and top career search portals.

Draft elements of Florida's Strategic Workforce Plan will also be posted on the web for quick access and review by partners and stakeholders. Future issues of the legislative brief will feature sections of the site or other leading resources for workforce information.

Contacting Us

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Penny Jo Pagona, *Deputy Director, Investment and Accountability*

Calendar

November 14, 2000

MEETING OF REGIONAL WORKFORCE BOARDS AND OTHER PARTNERS

Hyatt Regency Orlando Airport
9300 Airport Blvd.
Orlando, FL
1:00 - 5:00

***Check www.workforceflorida.com
for updates and agendas.***

November 15, 2000

WORKFORCE FLORIDA STATE BOARD MEETING

Hyatt Regency Orlando Airport
9300 Airport Blvd.
Orlando, FL
9:30 - 1:00 *WFI Councils to meet in breakout rooms*
1:15 - 4:30 *Full Board Meeting*

Next Issue:

- ◆ Progress on integrating and enhancing workforce information technology.
- ◆ Performance highlights from Florida's Quick Response and Incumbent Worker Training programs.



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