

**CITIZENS REVIEW GROUP:
AGENCY FOR WORKFORCE INNOVATION**

**Team Report to Governor Crist
and Lieutenant Governor Kottkamp**

DECEMBER 2006

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I. Overview of the Department/Agency and the CRG's activities

(a) The Workforce Innovation Act of 2000 (5/30/2000), restructured the workforce development programs by placing employment services and unemployment compensation together under a newly formed Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI). These services were previously within the Department of Labor and Employment Security. Early learning programs were added later. (See s. 20.50 F. S. for further reference.)

(b) The primary state statutes for each of the three business lines with AWI are:

- i. Unemployment Compensation: Chapter 443, F.S.
- ii. Workforce: Chapter 445, F.S.
- iii. Early Learning: Chapter 411 (school readiness) and chapter 1002, Part V (VPK), Florida Statutes §445

(c) The mission of AWI is to provide innovative and timely services to Florida's Workforce and Early Learning System to create a globally competitive workforce and advance Florida's economic prosperity. AWI's goals include preparing Florida's talent pool to meet the current and future workforce needs of this state's business community.

(d) The agency's personnel with whom the CRG met include:

Curtis Austin, President, Workforce Florida, Inc.; Linda H. South, Director, Agency for Workforce Innovation; James Lincoln Finch, Chief of Staff, Agency for Workforce Innovation; Barbara Griffin, Assistant Director, Agency for Workforce Innovation; Barbara Foley, Director of Legislative Affairs, Agency for Workforce Innovation; James Mathews, Inspector General, Agency for Workforce Innovation; Gladys Wilson, Deputy, Office of Early Learning, Agency for Workforce Innovation; Tom Clendenning, Deputy, Unemployment Services, Agency for Workforce Innovation; Kevin Thomas, Comptroller, Agency for Workforce Innovation.

(e) Non-agency personnel/entities from whom the CRG received input:

Charlie Guy, My Bright Zone; Gwen Stephenson, President, Hillsborough Community College; Mason Jackson, Director, Workforce One in Broward County; Susan Simpler; Dr. Ann Southerland; Robert Maurer; Brian Monroe; Tom Woods; Linda Alesionok; Roy Miller; Suzanne R. Gellens; and Roy Opfer.

II. Department/Agency Structure

(a) Organization:

Florida's Workforce System comprises of two principal state-level partners (Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) and the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) as well as 24 Regional Workforce Boards and almost 100 One-Stop Centers.

1. Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) is a workforce strategy and policy-sitting board.

WFI is led by a public/private board with 35 members and is independently staffed with 24 employees. The Governor appoints the private sector person to chair this Board. \$11.9 million is supported with a

mix of General Revenue (\$2.4), state trust funds (\$5.2 million), federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds (\$1 million) and federal workforce funds (\$3.3 million). Also \$5 million for Quick Response Training Program; \$3.6 non-reoccurring General Revenue to administer the Workforce Cluster Centers. Approximately \$2.9 million for all fund sources supports the on-going operations of WFI.

2. The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) is accountable to the Governor and federal agencies for the administration of workforce program services and funds. It performs these functions discussed above. These are primarily funded and operated within both federal and state program requirements. These business lines are supported by the agency's Office of Support Services. See III(b)iv below for funding.

3. Regional Workforce Boards – At the local level, there are 24 Regional Workforce Boards composed of public and private section leaders responsible for implementing programs and delivering services in accordance with federal program requirements and WFI statewide policies. Funding of approximately \$273,876,757 was allotted as of November 30, 2006, to fund these boards.

4. One-Stop Career Centers – At these 100 statewide centers, job seekers have access to services that include workforce education and training, job placement assistance, support services, access to childcare, unemployment compensation automation access and public and Food Stamp ACCESS assistance, as well as assistance from various local community organizations. The funds allocated to Regional Workforce Boards comprise the total fund sent to the regions to operate various programs that comprise Florida's One-Stop Career Center System.

5. Florida's Early Learning System – AWI is responsible for the administration of Florida's early learning programs including School Readiness services and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) through federal and state grant awards. "For the most part, actual customer services are provided through 31 local Early Learning Coalitions and nearly 16,000 providers." The majority of funding for School Readiness System is funded by federal dollars with \$188,495.17 in General Revenue (GR) as a required match. The balance comes from Social Services Block Grant and TANF. The Voluntary Prekindergarten funding is entirely General Revenue and \$389,371,000 is allocated to fund this program.. Early Learning Coalition Allotments including the two above equals \$1,022,495,332 as of November 30, 2006 with \$633,124,332 for School Readiness and \$389,371,000 for VPK

(b) There are approximately 1,462* full-time positions within the agency statewide.

(c) Employee breakdown (SMS, SEC, CS, OPS)*

- i. OPS employee count is 162
- ii. Career Service employee count is 1032
- iii. SES employee count is 252
- iv. SMS employee count is 10
- v. CS EXEMPT (EOG) employee count is 5
- vi. Fixed Salary employee count is 1

These employees are currently employed as follows: Executive Director and Support Services (Director's Office, Legal, and Admin. Services, etc. 208.5 state FTE; Workforce Program Support 745.49 state FTE; Workforce Florida, Inc, 11 state FTE, plus contract staff; Unemployment Compensation 461 state FTE; Unemployment Appeals Commission 30 state FTE; Early Learning Services 70 state FTE.

*All figures above are as of December 7, 2006. The Agency is budgeted for 1,576 full time positions statewide.

(d) Turnover rates – Calculated by the Department of Management at 12.98% and represents the average total vacancy rate of the Agency for the period of 7/05 to 6/06.

(e) Advisory boards and other entities (For Gubernatorial appointment)*

i. Workforce Florida, Inc. Board of Directors are appointed for staggered terms with 8 positions set for appointments March 21, 2007; 6 for March 21, 2008; 8 for March 21, 2009, including the Chair for a total of 22 appointments and who serve for no more than two-three year terms. In addition, the Chair is by appointment of the Governor and thereafter has a contractual relationship with Workforce Florida, Inc.

ii. Early Learning Coalitions – The Governor appoints three members to each of the 31 Coalitions for a total of 93 appointments. These are for 2 and 4 year terms with 25 to be appointed on April 30, 2007; 28 scheduled for April 30, 2008, and 32 scheduled for April 30, 2009, including the Chair. There are currently 8 vacant positions.

iii. Unemployment Appeals Commission – 4 year staggered terms; requires confirmation by the Senate. One position for commissioner is scheduled for appointment on July 1, 2007; one on July 1, 2008 and the Chairman on July 1, 2009, for a total of 3 appointments.

iv. The Child Care Executive Partnership Program (CCEP) – The CCEP is a part of the AWI – Office of Early Learning. At the state level, it is governed by a board of 9 members of the corporate or child care community all of whom are appointed by the Governor and includes a representative of the Executive Office of the Governor. Six positions have been filled until September 30, 2008. Three positions are vacant.

v. Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) – The ELAC is comprised of the Chair of each local Early Learning Coalition. One Chair of all of these Chairs is appointed by the Governor as Chair of ELAC.

*Attached to this report are listings of all appointments to be made by the Governor.

III. Operations

(a) Program Areas/Responsibilities

i. Florida's workforce system is collectively known as the Employ Florida network. It comprises two principal state-level partners, Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) and Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), as well as the 24 Regional Workforce Boards and almost 100 One-Stop Centers. All partners are focused on strengthening the state's business climate by helping Floridians enter, remain employed, and advance in the workforce by improving their skills. Major workforce programs include recruitment and job placement services, employment and training services, welfare transition programs, food stamp employment training, employment services, job corps outreach and admissions, and re-employment assessments.

ii. AWI operates Florida's Unemployment Compensation (UC) system which provides temporary wage replacement benefits to qualified individuals who are out of work through no fault of their own. Unemployment Compensation is a federal and state-mandated, state-operated program. AWI also operates related unemployment programs including short-time compensation, unemployment compensation for federal employees and ex-military members, interstate benefits, trade adjustment assistance, and disaster unemployment assistance.

iii. AWI has primary responsibility for Florida's Early Learning system which exists to ensure that all children are emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually ready to enter school and ready to learn, fully recognizing the crucial role of parents as their child's first teacher. This agency is responsible for the administration of Florida's early learning

programs, including School Readiness services and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program through federal and state grant awards.

iv. The Office of Support Services within the agency has the responsibility for administrative support of the program units. This support includes critical functions such as financial management, budget, information technology, federal and state grants and contracts, purchasing, human resource management and facilities management.

(b) Budget Fiscal year July 1, 2006:

i. The budget is a total \$2.5 billion for 2006 from more than 150 federal and state grant awards all primarily federally funded. Point nine billion dollars (\$.9 billion) were paid in unemployment compensation benefit payments to eligible workers during the 2006 fiscal year. Unemployment tax collections from Florida businesses totaled \$1.25 billion in 2006 fiscal year which is deposited into the Unemployment Trust Fund and held at the federal level.

ii. Proposed budget for next fiscal year

AWI's budget request is essentially a continuation budget. This is at the request of the current administration. The issues relate to the continuation of budget authority in 07-08 for certain activities that were authorized with non-recurring budget in 06-07. In the Workforce business line, AWI is asking for budget authority and general revenue dollars to continue the following activities budgeted and funded as non-recurring general revenue activities in 06-07: Incumbent Worker Training, Ready-to-Work Initiative, and Military Families Program. Total request included in the 07-08 LBR for these activities is \$6.2 million. In the Early Learning business line, to ensure a continuation budget AWI is requesting restoration of \$22.3 million in budget authority that is non-recurring in the current year. Of the requested budget, \$19.3 million would be funded with available federal dollars and \$3 million with general revenue dollars. The Agency is also requesting \$3.5 million in budget authority to complete fixed capital outlay projects on agency-owned buildings. The budget authority will be funded from proceeds received from the sale of previously owned buildings and from UC penalty and interest funds uniquely available to the Agency.

iii. Comparison to previous year

The Agency reports that AWI is primarily a federally funded agency, the mix of revenue sources as set forth below is generally constant. The Agency reports that it does not anticipate receiving any new sources of federal revenue for 07-08 fiscal budget.

iv. Sources as of July 1, 2006

1. Agency wide the Major Revenue Sources* are:	
a. Workforce General Revenue and non-federal (2%)	\$ 30,347,288
b. Welfare Transition (TANT) (6%)	\$ 98,340,468
c. Unemployment Compensation operations (5%)	\$ 74,074,403
d. School Readiness General Revenue (12%)	\$188, 495,149
e. Workforce Investment Act (11%)	\$181,260,393
f. Child Care Development Block Grant & other	
Federal funds (16%)	\$255,776,362
g. Voluntary PreKindergarten (25%)	\$394,569,523
h. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (18%)	\$287,635,622
i. Other – Federal Workforce (5%)	<u>\$ 84,614,158</u>
TOTAL BUDGET	<u>\$1,595,113,366</u>

*Does not include any unemployment compensation benefit payments of \$.9 billion.

v. Expenditures – As of November 30, 2006, with about 42% of the 06-07 fiscal year complete, AWI reports that it has utilized 33% of its current year budget authority. Various reasons exist for the under-utilization of budget authority at this point in the fiscal year. The Agency lists those reasons as e.g. the number of VPK enrollments versus available funding, timing of contractual payments, etc. and that this nuance is typical of its yearly expenditure patterns

(c) Pending Contracts: **

- i. Interagency Agreement between AWI and DOR for Unemployment Tax Services. Ends 9.30.07 in the amount of \$21,587,042.
- ii. Redlands Christian Migrant Farmworkers Associations, Minority Farmworker Services, Office of Early Learning. Ends 6.30.07 in the amount of \$12,214,939.
- iii. Department of Children and Families, School Readiness Program, Office of Early Learning. Ends 6.30.07 in the amount of \$10,743,697.
- iv. Kelly Services, Unemployment Compensation Employment Services Recruitment and Payroll, Unemployment Compensation. Ends 12.31.07 in the amount of \$10,000,000.
- v. Geographic Solutions, Acquisition of Web-based Job Listing Services, Workforce Florida, Inc. Ends 1.14.10, in the amount of \$9,730,184.
- vi. ISOCORP, Inc. Staff Augmentation for Application Services, Unemployment Compensation. Ends 12.31.06 in the amount of \$3,388,080.
- vii. CIBER, Inc. OSMIS Staff Augmentation Services, Information Technology. Ends 6.30.07 in the amount of \$2,310,320.
- viii. University of North Florida, Technical Assistance, Office of Early Learning. Ends 6.30.07 in the amount of \$2,149,929.
- ix. Western Kentucky University, Technical Assistance, Office of Early Learning. Ends 6.30.07 in the amount of \$1,700,000.
- x. Covansys, Enhanced Field System Maintenance, Office of Early Learning. Ends 12.31.06 in the amount of \$1,591,440.**

The only major procurement in the known future that was disclosed to the team is for Early Learning Information (ELIS) System. It is estimated to be a \$15 million project and is described as follows:

Improved and New Technology – AWI is engaged in a three year process to develop and deploy a new comprehensive state-wide Early Learning Information System (ELIS) that will enhance customer service delivery as well as improved financial and performance tracking. Critical features will include expanded use of electronic background and fingerprinting systems for teacher/instructor/aid background checks and utilization of swipe-card technology for child attendance in Early Learning Programs.

** Attached to this report is a complete listing of all agency contracts. The contracts listed above are those that equal \$1.5 million or more.

(d) Other key dates approaching:

1. December 2006

- i. Unemployment press release.
- ii. Release RFP to procure 2007-2008 financial monitoring services for RWBs.
- iii. State Auditor General Preliminary and Tentative findings for 05/06 Financial Statement audit expected to be released for agency comment.
- iv. Early Learning Advisory Council meeting.
- v. Florida Health Care Tax Credit State arrangement plan terminated with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Florida.
- vi. Notify USDOL of the State's decision to administer the last year of the state 5-year Job Corp program.

- vii. Release Florida's preliminary labor market statistics (employment and unemployment) for November 2006.

2. January 2007

- i. Obtain delegation of authority from Governor to AWI Director so AWI Director can sign contracts, grant, and other instruments as necessary to execute AWI functions.
- ii. Unemployment press release.
- iii. AWI recommends to the Legislature and Governor a school readiness equity allocation formula.
- iv. UNF Even Start contract begins.
- v. Saber new contract begins.
- vi. Child Care Executive Partnership Board Meeting (CCEP)
- vii. Mid-month, potential public hearing for School Readiness Health & Safety and Education Requirements proposed rule.
- viii. Florida's Workforce training summit.
- ix. Release Florida's preliminary labor market statistics for December 2006.
- x. Mail IRE Form 1099-G to claimants who received benefits during calendar year ending 12/31/06.

3. February 2007

- i. Unemployment press release.
- ii. Agencies may submit amended budget request after the Governor submits his budget.
- iii. State Auditor General preliminary & tentative findings for the 05/06 Federal Audit expected to be released for comment.
- iv. Begin VPK enrollment for 2007-2008 program year.
- v. Begin VPK enrollment for 2007 Summer program.
- vi. Convene the Workforce Estimating Conference to identify high-skill high-wage occupations for targeting Workforce Program funding.

(e) Mechanisms for providing citizen input – Internet page comments can be made directly to the agency; toll free lines (8) for citizens input on programs; in Early Learning focus groups are used; and direction is received from 55 Boards/Coalitions - the 24 local boards and the 31 Early Learning Coalitions.

(f) Accountability measures – The Agency by contract with WF, Inc. is held to contractual agreements including adhering to state and federal performance measures and outcome.

(g) Shared missions with other state agencies -Transition to Independence Advisory Committee – representatives from state agencies, et al who address issues related to improving services to youth aging out of foster care; Blue Ribbon Implementation Work Group – promote interagency collaboration and to assist in the implementation of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Persons with Disabilities; Florida Inter-Program Task Force; National Business Relations Group; Department of Revenue – DOR is responsible for Unemployment Tax Collection Services for the Agency; Department of Management Services responsible for the provision of legacy mainframe services; Department of Highway & Motor Vehicles – matching services with database of drivers' license to verify identify of individuals filing claims; Florida Department of Law Enforcement – date on incarcerated individuals in state and law enforcement jurisdictions complied by Stop Inmate Fraud Program and is matched against claims records; Department of Health - date from state death registry is matched against UC claim records; Department of Revenue/Child Support Enforcement Program – uses the matching of UC claim records against the State Directory of New Hires to determine child support arrearages; US Social Security Administration – provides validation of social security numbers used in unemployment compensation claims; US Department of Health and Human Services – data is used in matching services to compare UC benefit payments with employment data; The Florida Department of Children &

Families – provides statewide provider registration and licensing for child care centers and programs; The Florida Department of Health – provides provider inspections at child care facilities; The Florida Department of Education – provides curricula standards for Voluntary Kindergarten programs and other support and also provides actual School Readiness and VPK services to children and families through Florida local school districts and schools.

(h) Relevant federal law or federal partnership – Labor and HHS Department and WIA (Workforce Investment Act); TANF (welfare) Unemployment Compensation with the Social Security Act: for Early Learning TAMF And Child Care Development Funds (CCDF)

(i) Reports due to be issued in the next 12 months

- i. Unemployment press releases.
- ii. Florida’s preliminary labor market statistics (employment and unemployment).
- iii. Recommendation to the Legislature and Governor a school readiness equity allocation formula.
- iv. Financial monitoring reports for RWBs and ELCs approved and finalized by AWI staff.
- v. Coalition Plan annual update.

IV. Legislative Priorities

Amend Ch. 445 (TANF) to conform state statute to federal statute (changes are recorded by the Deficit Reduction Act, 2005, PL 109-171.

V. Past Successes

- i. Florida’s Unemployment Compensation program has been a leader in deploying new technologies in the delivery of services. Internet and telephone claims provide for increased customer access, quality service and efficiencies. The system has been highly successful in its response to disaster unemployment services in the wake of hurricanes that have plagued Florida and sister states. It has been cited by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Regional Office as one of the most improved programs in the nation.
- ii. Florida’s workforce system leads the charge in the successful implementation of welfare reform in this state. Florida has been successful in not only reducing the welfare files, but in helping break the cycle of poverty and dependence. Of the children aged 9 through 17 on public assistance in 1996, less than 1% of those young adults (now 19-27) are receiving benefits today.
- iii. In just one year, Florida implemented its constitutional mandated Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program, vaulting to the second largest program in the nation and is on track to become the largest system in its second year.

VI. Challenges and Disappointments – There was an embezzlement of funds of approximately \$2.4 million over a three or four year period by an employee of Workforce One (Regional Workforce Board 22 – Broward County). There is a criminal investigation ongoing so the Agency itself has received very little written information. Measures have been undertaken to prevent a reoccurrence of such embezzlement in the future.

VII. The Next Four Years

(a) Immediate or short-term concerns

1. UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

- **Unemployment Insurance Administrative Funding Short-fall:** Florida’s Unemployment Compensation System faces critical shortfalls in this fiscal year. AWI reports that it has already begun staff reductions and other costs avoidance efforts.

- **Modernization of the Benefits System:** The current mainframe claims and benefit computer system is over 30 years old and needs updating with current technologies. Automation needs are not being addressed due to limited funding and resources.
- **SUNTAX** – AWI has agreed to have the Department of Revenue integrate unemployment tax into its SAP based on SUNTAX system. AWI feels that successful implementation is vital to the success of the UC program. This program is currently in the design state and currently funded by DOR. It has cost today \$225,650.65 paid by DOR and staff time of AWI. No additional cost is expected as AWI currently expends \$3 million for maintaining the UT system it uses.

2. EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM:

The majority of funding for the School Readiness system is federal with some General Revenue as a required match.

The Voluntary Prekindergarten funding is entirely General Revenue. The agency has submitted a continuation budget; however, the following budget concerns submitted by coalitions and providers are anticipated:

- The need for additional dollars for the payment rate for children who qualify for state assistance. (No increase has been given for over 5 years. The agency reports that providers are very concerned that there has been no rate increase.)
- Additional funding is needed for local coalitions to monitor VPK providers. The agency reports that the current 5% does not provide adequate funding to monitor the VPK providers to ensure they are meeting the standards outlined in statute.
- Quality Rating System. The agency advised if the decision is made to begin to rate child care providers similar to restaurants and hotels, additional revenue will be needed to fund this initiative.
- Further that if the swipe-card technology is implemented, approximately 15 million dollars will be needed.

(b) Long Term Plans

1. UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

One of the concerns that the Team had was the fact that Florida receives only 28 cents on every dollar paid by Florida employers and therefore Florida has the nation's lowest return on Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) dollars back from the federal government. This money is returned to the state as their administrative financing for unemployment insurance, labor market services and job placement programs based on a federal formula. Florida employers are paying more to operate programs for other states than its own. This issue should be addressed to determine a plan to receive monies from the federal government that is based on workload demand and not funding based on prior spending.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

I. CHOICE

Recognized as one of the most promising models for secondary education to develop and provide "feeder systems" into critical sectors of the Florida economy where severe manpower deficiencies exist, now, and into the future.

- Expand the grant program from six to 10 school districts to assist replication of this highly prospective model for developing state-wide industry accredited and certified career tracks.
- Have a mandated DOE/AWI joint effort here.

II. EMPLOY FLORIDA BANNER CENTERS

- Why is the Construction Industry not included among those where additional centers are planned? Refer to Enterprise Florida economic forecast information.
- Can be linked with a continuation of the Florida ReBuilds initiative.

III. EMPLOY FLORIDA MARKETPLACE (EFM)

- Needs to be continued, but, with added funding for “marketing and advertising.”

IV. FLORIDA’S BEST

- This program needs to be “married” with a continuation of FL ReBuilds.
- Increase focus on the “under employed” worker. This population offers the largest and most available resource for meeting the needs of specific industry manpower deficiencies, i.e. entry-level workers in construction sectors of roofing, masonry, and form carpentry.

V. FLORIDA REBUILDS

- What are pertinent data for forecasted workforce deficiencies (5 and 10 years) in skilled labor (journeyman level) for carpentry, masonry, roofing, plumbing, electrical, mechanical) Economic Impact!
- What are forecasted workforce needs (jobs created) in the next 5 and 10 years for these same workforce areas?
- What is the forecasted impact of those areas above by immigration reform?
- Current initiative can be very beneficial in meeting primary objective of bringing new-comers into needed construction areas.
- Present models where the total focus is on skills enhancements of incumbent workers are mainly providing subsidy to employers for skills upgrades that would occur normally.
- Present focus on funding directly to employers will not significantly increase the total number of skilled workers across the construction sectors of the economy.
- How are desired outcomes being measured? Specifically, quality of training and delivery, long-term employability of trainees, pay growth of trainees, career track potential for trainees.
- Recommendations: this initiative provides an excellent vehicle for Florida to enhance the feeder systems into construction workforce deficiencies and SHOULD BE CONTINUED. But, consider if the most effective models (3-4) now being implemented should be used throughout the 24 regions. Funding directly to the employers should be changed so that registered training providers are selected for delivery of carefully selected training programs with measurable outcomes and delivery systems that can be monitored.

VI. VETERANS OUTREACH

- Must be continued with focus on the Transition Assistance Centers that serve veterans who exit the military branches.

VII. WORKER TRAINING

- The Quick Response Training Program can possibly be married with Florida’s Best and Florida ReBuilds.
- How much redundancy do we have among these programs?

VIII. READY TO WORK

- This Dept. of Education initiative should be closer linked with AWI initiatives and collaborative efforts enhanced.
- Additional funding commensurate with this “team approach.”

IX. SUMMARY

The workforce needs affecting Florida are real-time factors that impose very significant economic impacts, now, and well into the future. Accordingly, these following recommendations are included:

- Choice Program is illustrative of one viable long-term solution (5-8 years). Current needs dictate a high level of focus on means to begin offsetting these immediate workforce deficiencies. Expansion of the Choice Program from six to ten granted schools should include one in the largest school district(s) as a pilot.
- NURSES NOW PROGRAM – There is currently a program authorized by the Workforce Investment Act 171 Special Projects/Earmarked Funds to address the critical need for nurses throughout Florida. While it does focus on “increasing the capacity of the education and training system”, the Group wondered if the use of the Community College System and Distance Learning facilities has been sufficiently studied to address this shortage. It was reported that of 490 enrolled in the program only 248 had obtained employment.
- Has AWI and others looked at Workforce e-Learning Initiatives to bring about statewide coordination, communication and collaboration Owners: FDLC, DOE with input from community colleges and district schools to establish a program; and coordinate efforts to increase the courses available for e-Learning. It is critical that Florida address the needs of citizens to develop skills to find work not only in the construction area but also in the services area.
- Thought should be given as to whether or not there is a need for an executive board for Workforce Education inside AWI.

(b) Future goals (reflecting Governor-elect Crist’s vision of Hope, Safety, Opportunity)

Florida’s Workforce System

The Agency Transition Plan (2007) accurately describes the on-going and special programs which “link education, economic development and employment.” These programs have done an excellent job of training and retraining workers and linking job seekers to employees.

The Agency also recognizes the challenges for the future and has set goals in the transition plan (pages 26-28) to meet these challenges. The transition team concurs with the challenges and goals but wishes to add emphasis to the need to find a valid, external to Florida, source for employees. This is a current crisis in Florida and will become a major deterrent to the economic development of the state. Programs to reach out to “baby boomers” and digital workers are appropriate but do little for the service and construction industries which have already reached the crisis level in worker needs.

The Agency has strong systems in place to link job seekers and employers. It is essential that these systems be promoted within the state and outside of the state to maximize its utilization by employers and to increase the number of job seekers relocating to Florida.

Community College and vocational centers are initiating programs and increasing enrollments to meet the needs of employees in critical areas. Incentives to grow these programs must be continued and the out-of-state fee structure, which is a major deterrent to enrollment, must be removed.

Further, there seems to be a disconnect or a “wrong” message being sent to high school students: “If you don’t pursue a baccalaureate degree, you are not going to have a successful career.” Focus should also be placed on dual path education opportunities and those who seek post secondary training. This path should not be viewed as a dead-end to those who do not follow the degree route to education.

It is clear that workers from other countries are currently a major factor in the Florida workforce. While the resolution of the issues regarding this segment of the workforce is clearly a national issue, it is essential that these workers become an integrated component of the Florida workforce.

(c) Cutting edge ideas and innovations

Organization Issues that should be addressed at some time in the future to determine if the current organization structure is efficient to meet state needs:

With the current leadership, the Agency appears to work effectively within the existing organization. The transition team does feel there are two issues that need to be studied for future consideration.

The first issue is the relationship between Workforce Florida, Inc. and the Agency. The establishment of Workforce Florida as a non-governmental entity to involve business leaders in the development of the workforce is supported. Likewise, the ability of the entity to operate outside of state agency guidelines and restrictions in order to expedite business processes is understood as critically necessary. The question that should be considered is whether a separate staffing of Workforce Florida is appropriate. Could the operation be more efficient, and effective, if the Agency head served as secretary to the Board and provided appropriate staffing for the functions of the Board.

The second issue is the inclusion of the Office of Early Learning, and particularly the volunteer pre-kindergarten programs in the responsibilities of this Agency. The transition team clearly understands the critical link between “early learning” and long-term workforce needs. In fact, this link is so critical that the focus must move beyond licensing, governance, and workforce training and fraud detection (all currently handled by the Agency in an exemplary manner). The focus must move to a global strategy to ensure that every child meets readiness criteria when entering kindergarten. Whether these programs remain within the Agency or are moved, resources must be directed to local initiatives that ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn and to meet school readiness criteria. To accomplish this, consideration should be given to move Office of Early Learning to the Office of the Governor.

Challenges The Agency Currently Confronts:

Child Care Licensing: DCF, DOH, DOE and AWI along with county governments in 7 counties currently oversee licensing. The result is areas where taxpayer's monies could be saved by consolidating offices to avoid **duplication** of licensing steps and/or requirements and gaps in licensing where there are providers that are being paid by coalitions to care for our children, but there is a lapse in quality because of the absence of a state-wide uniform licensing guideline. Not all providers of child care are required to be licensed in Florida, and other providers do not meet current licensing requirements resulting in safety issues for our children. A team from AWI, DCF, and DOH has met twice since September to work on a common matrix; the next meeting will address current strengths, duplications, gaps and/or overlaps. While less government is a guiding principle, the safety and welfare of children must be ensured by providing (1) initial, uniform licensing requirements and (2) adequate follow-up visits to ensure continued compliance with requirements. For those counties that regulate their own licensing, meeting state guidelines should be required in order to receive state monies. This may require increased staff and resources to ensure that children are receiving services in a safe, healthy and productive environment.

Improved Fraud Prevention and Detection: Continue coordination with a federal contractor and the UC program to combat and avoid fraud.

Improved and New Technology: Continue development and deployment of a state-wide Information System to enhance customer service and improve financial and performance tracking; this includes

electronic background and fingerprinting systems for teacher/instructor/aide background checks and swipe-card technology for child attendance. The present budget would need to be increased by a projected amount of 15 million dollars to achieve this in order to provide the necessary technological tools to decrease fraud and increase safety and security for children.

Strengthening Early Learning Coalition Governance: Continue to work with the 31 Early Learning Coalition boards to strengthen governance, decision-making, program operations and improve customer service.

POLICY ISSUES: To meet the challenges above, the following may need to be addressed:

- Review of the requirements of license-exempt providers in the VPK program. (Some of the license-exempt providers who are eligible VPK providers by their accreditation standards do not meet minimum licensing standards.)
- Early Learning Quality Standards for child care providers (similar to rating of restaurants and hotels)
- Professional development system for the early childhood workforce
- Revisit the aspirational goals in VPK legislation (Florida Statue 1002.65 (1)(a): By the year 2010-2011 school year: 1. Each pre-kindergarten class will have at least one pre-k instructor who holds an associate's or higher degree in the field of early childhood education or child development; and 2. For each pre-k class composed of 11 or more students, in addition to a pre-k instructor who meets the requirements of subparagraph 1, the class will have at least one pre-k instructor who meets the requirements of s. 1002.55(3)(c) or has a Child Development Associate's credential. (b) By the 2013-2014 school year, each pre-k class will have at least one pre-k instructor who holds a bachelor's or higher-degree in the field of early childhood or child development. Either have the program or not, but to statutorily create "aspirational" goals sends a very bad message. These goals should be mandated if the system is going to be kept. The system would have eight years to prepare for the increase in the budget to accomplish this. Florida is either going to prepare these children in the VPK program for school or it is not; however a different approach appears to be necessary to Florida where it needs to be in early education.
- Upgrading the Skills of the Early Learning Workforce: More than half of the instructors providing services to children have a high school diploma, GED or less as their highest education achievement. A professional development system needs to be put into place to educate the workforce and provide sufficient compensation to retain them once trained. This program is to prepare four year olds for kindergarten. We would not accept a professional at the kindergarten level to not have professional training. We should not accept it here. Doing so only makes this program a child care program and not an educational program. Consideration should be given as to whether or not this program is affordable and accessible to the families that are in need of this program. The program either needs to be properly funded or it needs to be dropped.
- Data Management and sharing.

Respectfully submitted,

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