

SECTION 1



FLORIDA'S WORKFORCE SYSTEM: A Historical Perspective

The following is a brief history of Florida's workforce development system.

Before July 1996

There was minimal state law governing job training and programs to assist people in becoming self-sufficient. Regional *Private Industry Councils* (PICs) were in existence throughout the nation. The federal *Job Training Partnership Act* (JTPA) established councils to oversee spending of federal job training funds.

July 1996

The Workforce Florida Act replaced PICs with Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) and realigned regions to match community college districts. Florida's Legislature also created the Work & Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) Act to implement welfare reform. While two separate boards existed at the state level, the law allowed regional workforce boards to also function as WAGES coalitions, monitoring welfare reform at the local level. During this time, the Florida Department of Labor began managing WAGES activities and job placements.

July 1998

Florida's Legislature took all WAGES responsibilities from the Florida Department of Labor and placed them under control of local workforce boards, which were already contracting for case management and support services for welfare recipients.

August 1998

The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was signed into law replacing JTPA and consolidated approximately 14 different funding streams under a One-Stop System concept, which was to be governed by local workforce boards. Florida was one of six states designated as an early implementing state, beginning July 1999.

October 1999

The Senate Select Committee created a report to consolidate workforce and welfare reform programs into a single point of accountability. This became the foundation of the proposed legislation for the current workforce development system.

July 2000

The Florida Workforce Innovation Act (WIA) became law effective July 1, 2000. At the state level, Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI – now known as CareerSource Florida, CSF) was created as a separate not-for-profit corporation and was established as the governing body for Florida workforce development. The WFI (CSF) Board of Directors consists of private business sector (mandated 51%) and mandatory members appointed by the governor. WFI replaced the state Workforce Development Board, which functioned as a board of Enterprise Florida and the WAGES board. This law created 24 RWBs, with over 100 One-Stop Career Centers located throughout the state. The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI – which later became the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity [DEO] and is now known as the Florida Department of Commerce [Florida Commerce]) was developed to replace the Florida Department of Labor, with AWI (Florida Commerce) serving as the administrative entity for WFI and providing technical and programmatic assistance to the RWBs.

The respective Boards of County Commissioners (BOCC) formed local workforce consortiums, which allows for the operational and fiscal oversight of RWBs. Each BOCC identifies a commissioner to serve as a Local Elected Official (LEO) on the workforce Executive Board, with the responsibility to approve membership of the RWB's board of directors. The local workforce boards have a majority membership (51%) from the private business sector, with mandated partners to include representatives from EDCs, secondary and post-secondary education, housing authorities, vocational rehab, labor unions, and others.

July 2012

Federal and state legislation redirected the respective programs and the workforce development system to merge into an integrated process, with similar goals and objectives. The Workforce Accountability Act (WAA) strengthened the accountability and transparency of RWBs. WAA limits RWB membership, requires board members to file financial disclosure forms, restricts contracting with RWB members, reduces the type of expenditures authorized for ITAs and allows RWBs to apply for waivers from this requirement, and requires WFI to establish a single brand for the entire Florida workforce system.

February 2014

The statewide workforce system was united under a new brand that conveys the shared mission to connect businesses with qualified, skilled talent, and Floridians with employment and career development opportunities. Today, Florida's workforce system is the CareerSource Florida (CSF) network. Local regions carry the CareerSource name along with a geographic identifier. Heartland Workforce Investment Board, Inc. changed its d/b/a name from Heartland Workforce to CareerSource Heartland. This transition assists businesses and job seekers in finding workforce services anywhere in the state.

July 2015

In January 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was enacted, amending the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). WIOA is designed to strengthen the workforce development system through innovation; and to align and improve employment, training, and education programs in the United States. Implementation of this Act is occurring in stages. The initial changes, which began July 1, 2015, impact programmatic language and service delivery.

July 2021

Florida's Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, effective July 1, 2021, created a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing access, alignment, and accountability across the State's workforce development system. Including local workforce boards, CareerSource Florida, and the respective Departments of Economic Opportunity, Education, and Children and Families, the Act takes a system-wide approach toward the achievement of a world-class workforce system. Key workforce elements include the development of a "no wrong door entry strategy" to help Floridians access services from any workforce partner; requirement of a "consumer-first" system that improves coordination among partners through an integrated system that includes common registration and intake, benefits screening, and case management; establishes a Credentials Review Committee to identify degree and non-degree credentials of value for inclusion on a Master Credentials List; creates a portal to provide Floridians with access to workforce-related data; requires the assignment of a letter grade for local workforce development boards based on performance and return on investment; requires staggered eight-year term limits for some members of local workforce boards; and, requires consideration of realignment of workforce areas to promote efficiency.

Current

Our current focus is on providing value-added services to local employers by locating or developing the talent they need to thrive in the global economy; preparing job seekers for employment; assisting newly employed individuals to successfully transition from welfare to work; and providing continuing services that promote job retention, career development, life-long learning, and economic self-sufficiency.

Locally, CareerSource Heartland maintains four Career Centers in support of DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties. The Board employs a President/Chief Executive Officer to manage day-to-day fiscal and programmatic operations and manage the workforce staff. The Board of Directors provides operational and fiscal oversight of the respective workforce programs, by providing guidance to the President/CEO.

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***CSF** is the state's chief workforce policy organization and principal architect in the efforts to meet the current and future workforce needs and challenges of Florida's businesses and citizens. **CSF** is a state partner, along with **Florida Commerce**, in the **Employ Florida** affiliate network of 24 business-led Regional Workforce Boards and numerous Centers that provide employment solutions throughout Florida.*

BACKGROUND: THE FLORIDA WORKFORCE SYSTEM

The goals of Florida's workforce development system are to build world-class talent, ensure business climate competitiveness, promote sustainable development to ensure Florida's superior quality of life, invest in Florida's innovation economy, establish Florida as a pre-eminent global hub, and accelerate Florida's economic diversification. CareerSource Centers assist employers with finding and training skilled workers, assist workers in gaining skills toward the achievement of economic self-sufficiency, and encourage the continued growth of Florida's economy. The workforce system provides employment-related services to employers and job seekers through several federally funded programs.

- The federal Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act supports the labor exchange program which provides recruiting assistance for employers through job order posting, job matching, and referral of qualified candidates. For job seekers, job search assistance including career counseling, provision of labor market information, job referrals, resume development, and interview coaching. The goal of WP is to match employers with qualified applicants.
- The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) enhances the comprehensive workforce development system previously created by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. It is designed to strengthen the system through innovation; to align and improve employment, training, and education programs in the United States; to reduce welfare dependency; increase economic self-sufficiency; meet the skill requirements of employers; increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants; increase attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials by participants; and improve the quality of the workforce, thus enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation.
- The federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, funded through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), assists recipients of public assistance to move from welfare to work by emphasizing self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. Recipients are required to participate in activities that will improve their job skills and ultimately result in employment.

CareerSource Florida (CSF), a non-profit public/private partnership, is responsible for developing statewide policies for Florida's workforce system. CSF board members are appointed by the Governor.

The Florida Department of Commerce (Florida Commerce), a state agency, is responsible for implementing CSF policies. Twenty-four (24) regional workforce boards govern the delivery of program services at the local level. CareerSource Centers are located throughout the state to provide employment services to job seekers and employers.

The regional workforce systems are operated through performance-based contracts that increase accountability to meet strategic and legislative mandated goals. However, each region is responsible to assure that its programs reflect the economic development, business and workforce needs of the local area. It is through the partnerships of EDUCATION—ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT—EMPLOYMENT (workforce) that regions will succeed in economic growth.

*This information is provided to assist board members in better understanding the role of **CareerSource Heartland (CSH)** in collaborating with our partners to promote economic viability in DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties.*

What is the Local Workforce Development Board's role in Florida's Workforce System?

In our four-county area – to satisfy the requirements of federal and state law – the respective Boards of County Commissioners (BOCCs) for DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Okeechobee have formed the Heartland Workforce Consortium, which provides for the operational and fiscal oversight of our Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB). Each BOCC identifies a commissioner to serve as a Local Elected Official (LEO) representative on the CSH Executive Board, with the responsibility to approve the membership of the board of directors and provide oversight of the local board operations. Federal and State law requires regional workforce boards to have a majority membership (51% or higher) from the private business sector, with mandated partners from other community organizations, to include economic development, secondary and post-secondary education, housing authorities, vocational rehabilitation, and labor unions.

The CSH Board employs a President/CEO to handle day-to-day fiscal and programmatic operations and manage the staff. The Board of Directors provides operational and fiscal oversight of the respective workforce programs, providing guidance and direction to the President/CEO that best reflects business demands, best practices, strategic imperatives, new initiatives, and priority-based resource allocation; as well as vision and focus supporting business growth and global competitiveness.

The Board provides policy and program guidance and exercises oversight for activities related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Workforce Innovation Act of 2000, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 which guides the Welfare Transition (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program, the Wagner-Peyser Act and other legislatively assigned workforce development programs. The Board makes recommendations, reviews and approves service delivery plans, seeks ways to solicit input and participation of the local business community for provision of services to residents and businesses in the local area, seeks ways to market program services to the community, and assures compliance with all state and federal laws regarding workforce programs.

The Board has specific standing committees/councils organized to enhance workforce development initiatives within the local area. In general, the committees/councils serve as the catalyst between industry, economic development organizations, educators, and training providers to identify skills needed to fill critical jobs for business retention, expansion, and recruitment activities; provide assistance and guidance in defining local goals and objectives to help underemployed workers improve their skills to obtain better jobs with better wages; determine ways to serve targeted groups within the community such as disabled workers, the homeless, Veterans, mature workers, and current or former recipients of cash assistance; develop Bylaws; provide oversight and monitoring of all aspects relating to fiscal, budget, auditing, and program monitoring; help guide strategies that promote programs which lead to successful entry into the workforce for youth; help develop marketing strategies; and review local and regional labor market trends to develop strategies for best meeting local labor market needs. CSH also partners with Regional Planning Councils, local governments, educational and economic

development organizations, and community partners to develop regionally based strategic plans for economic and workforce growth.

What are LWDBs doing to get people re-employed?

In addition to the activities noted in the previous response that reflect strategies to positively impact re-employment, CSH is involved in the development and approval of the local area's Demand Occupations List and provides input to the economic development organizations for the development of the regional Targeted Industry Cluster list. As noted above, CSH is involved in guiding and developing the strategic initiatives needed to best meet local labor market demands. This means active involvement in the identification of the needs of local businesses, development of partnerships with economic development organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and training providers; and includes oversight of and marketing strategies for Center Operations. CSH operates a separate Center in each of our four counties.

Each CSH Center in our workforce area is actively involved in the provision of re-employment activities, beginning with job seeker assessment, which includes an analysis of client's employment history, education, vocational skills, and strengths and weaknesses related to finding employment. Additional services include work search instruction and assistance; resume preparation assistance, review, and development; labor market information and counseling; interest or aptitude testing as determined appropriate; review and identification of transferrable skills; the assessment of skill gaps along with recommendations for training; job training assistance; and job placement assistance. CSH Center personnel also assist with job development and job matching to facilitate employment and/or re-employment.

Status of Skills Gap in Florida

Florida's Department of Commerce (Florida Commerce), in conjunction with Florida's Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, has released employment projections looking forward through the year 2028. According to this data, seven of the top ten fastest growing occupations in this local workforce area will require some level of post-secondary or Adult Vocational certificates. Six of the top twenty fastest growing occupations are healthcare related with projected growth percentages ranging from 23.0% to 29.9% in those areas.

IndexMundi.com (quick facts, Florida) indicates the following data (2014-18), on educational attainment within our area. Of persons age 25 and older, by county:

	DeSoto	Hardee	Highlands	Okeechobee	Florida
% HS graduate or higher	72.7%	75.8%	84.7%	75.0%	88.0%
% bachelor's degree or higher	11.4%	10.4%	17.0%	11.4%	29.2%

<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/florida/percent-of-people-25-years-and-over-with-bachelors-degree-or-higher#map>

Based on the data presented, there is little doubt that this area's workforce is at a distinct disadvantage compared to its surrounding labor markets and the State of Florida as a whole. With the projected fastest growing occupations requiring post-secondary education of some factor, the potential for a skills gap is evident. The ramifications for the future only exacerbate the needs of today's workforce for education and training.

While efforts are being made in the community to remedy these issues, this local area needs a broader range of skill sets and a broader range of available training programs. Flexible educational

and workforce systems are needed to properly prepare workers for success in the current and future work environment.

We believe the skills gap in Florida has also been negatively impacted by the Florida Department of Education's imposed fees for ABE/GED/ESOL classes. Class enrollment has reportedly decreased since the imposition of these fees. Comparing the volume of class enrollment since the imposition of the fees to the volume of class enrollment prior to the required fees may provide valuable data for legislative consideration.

Addressing Job/Skills Gap

CSH promotes lifelong learning, and works directly with training providers to encourage credentials that provide a pathway to career success.

- ✓ We have entered into agreements with educational providers to help fund ABE/GED/ESOL classes for eligible individuals lacking those skills.
- ✓ We work directly with businesses to identify job/skills gaps, and provide funding for employee training in an effort to provide current employees with the skills sets necessary to meet the needs of the employer.
- ✓ We work closely with economic development organizations, meeting with prospective employers to determine skills sets needed and to identify and coordinate funding for training as appropriate.
- ✓ We work with job seekers to help them identify their transferrable skills and skills gaps, to provide career counseling and guidance, and provide funding for training as appropriate.

LWDB's taking steps to help Florida businesses connect with and hire Floridians

Along with the activities noted above, CSH has a Business Outreach team that provides outreach to local businesses and offers various workforce related services. Job Fairs and hiring events are conducted based on business and community needs. The team obtains job vacancy orders, and provides employer training on the Employ Florida Marketplace system. The Business Operations Team plays a vital role in providing support to our businesses and collaborating with our Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce, Education, and other key partners to enhance the economic viability of our communities and local area. By working together with our partners, we gain valuable insight into targeted industries and can help shape the workforce talent pipeline that our local economy demands.

Workforce development is a prime component, or "the people/talent part", of economic development. Businesses cannot grow or even remain productive without workers, which are their lifeblood. The labor force, our job seekers, is the product that we deliver.

Local businesses face significant challenges with shortages of qualified labor, the need for more highly skilled workers, relevant labor market information, and the ability to retain quality staff. Our intention is to become the direct line of communication for all business workforce needs and increase market share over the traditional recruiting and hiring mechanisms used by most employers. We must strive to become the workforce *center of excellence* for the four-county area and can do so with increased value-added service to our business customers. Value-added services are those that are offered beyond the basic job listing for an employer. Our challenge is to continually assess employers' needs and deliver timely results that meet those needs.

To address the employers' existing workforce needs, and to anticipate and prepare for future needs, a broad menu of services must be made available. Following is a partial listing of activities our Business Operations Team considers in their effort to provide effective outreach to the business community:

1. Increase the employer penetration level by increasing the community's understanding and knowledge of available services, including the different incentives available for employers to recruit, train, and retain employees. This is enhanced through a successful marketing program. Key components of marketing include direct contact and public relations, with light advertising. Emphasis is placed on the use of the Employ Florida system.
2. Conduct an analysis of existing labor market conditions within the local area to identify skill gaps between an employer's needs and the skills of available workers. If there is a shortage of a qualified labor pool, CSH staff screen for eligible candidates with the potential for additional skills training using available funds. An effective Job Matching program assists in finding the best qualified candidate for filling vacancies or offering possible training opportunities. Communication meetings between Job-Seeker staff and Business Representatives have been a very effective "Best Practice" within the organization. Every effort is made to assist employers expand their access to the potential labor pools consisting of Youth, Older Workers, Veterans, individuals with disabilities, and other targeted populations. For the employed worker who lacks skills necessary for advancement, an alternative might be skills enhancement training. If an employer has a hard to fill vacancy and can train the right candidate, the use of funds through an On-the-Job Training (OJT) contract might be the best course of action.
3. Assist businesses with developing effective, non-traditional training modalities that can respond to rapid changes in business workforce needs and technology. Coordinate with the appropriate training provider for technical assistance and identification of a program curriculum and instructor, as necessary.
4. Analyze the workforce development needs of new or expanding businesses and offer solutions that can be provided through CareerSource Heartland. This could include developing customized training agreements with employers or industry groups of employers. Encourage and assist employers with applications for state-funded incentive grants through coordination with CareerSource Florida.
5. Understand the nature of businesses operating in our rural area and deliver workforce services in a manner that recognizes the urgency of the marketplace, hiring cycles, and patterns or seasonal staffing needs. This might also include educating the employer on special incentive programs such as Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Enterprise Zone, and Federal Bonding initiatives. Tax credits, refunds, exemptions, and workforce incentives have been established to assist employers in expanding their businesses, thus creating job opportunities within the local area.
6. Identify job openings with area employers, obtain the necessary job information (job title, minimum qualifications, pay, etc.) and provide applicable information for posting job orders for potential referrals of job seekers. This might also include customized recruitment assistance, including specialized candidate screening or physical space for the

recruitment of job seekers by the employer. Effective coordination is necessary to ensure proper and ongoing feedback is provided to the employer/customer on the status of their job opening(s), including number of referrals made.

7. Host job fairs, including those targeting non-traditional jobs, and assist with job placements.
8. Host business roundtable discussions and “business advantage” seminars, or similar events, for local businesses. Topics are determined based on the needs and/or workforce concerns of the business community.
9. Participate on industry-specific committees that are directly related to workforce activities when such opportunities become available.
10. Provide outplacement assistance for downsizing and business closures, in support of, and in collaboration with, the local workforce REACT team.
11. Confidentially track employer information for trend analysis on services provided. Use this information to follow-up with employers to assess their satisfaction and need for further assistance. Understand and make use of the many new reports on trends that are available both in-house and nationwide.
12. Coordinate with our Economic Development, Education, and Chamber of Commerce partners to expand their knowledge of workforce development with the intent to have them include our local strategy into their respective programs.

In addition to the above, CareerSource Heartland offers employment options to employees of a business involved in substantial layoff or plant closing.

Re-employment Activities

In the CSH area, re-employment compensation claimants are considered job seekers. As such, re-employment activities assigned for all individuals. As deemed appropriate to assist someone in obtaining re-employment, recommended activities might include:

- *career exploration*
- *referral to training*
- *job search assistance, job development*
- *resume review, preparation and development*
- *interview skills*
- *labor market information*
- *transferable skills review*
- *viewing of various employability-related DVDs.*



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Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act At-a-Glance

In July 2021 Florida’s Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act was enacted. This Act serves as a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing access, alignment, and accountability across the state’s workforce development system.

Florida’s workforce development system is defined in REACH as entities and activities that contribute to the state’s talent pipeline system through education, training, and support services that prepare individuals for employment or career advancement, and the entities responsible for oversight or conducting those activities such as Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB), one-stop career centers, CareerSource Florida, Inc., and the respective Departments of Economic Opportunity (Florida Commerce), Education, and Children and Families.

The REACH Act takes a system-wide approach to position Florida to help those with barriers to education and employment become self-sufficient, giving them better access to good jobs and career pathways that offer economic opportunity. Actions identified in the Act include:

- Establishment of the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) in the Executive Office of the Governor - to facilitate coordination and alignment of entities responsible for the state’s workforce development system.
- Creation of a “no-wrong-door entry” strategy to help Floridians access services from any workforce partner.
- Implementation of a “consumer-first workforce system” that improves coordination among one-stop career center partners through an integrated system that includes common registration and intake, benefits screening, and case management.
- Creation of a Credentials Review Committee to identify degree and nondegree credentials of value for approval by the state workforce development board and inclusion on a Master Credentials List.
- Adding Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) Act partners representing the Department of Education’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Blind Services, as well as the Department of Children and Families, to the CareerSource Florida Board.
- Creation of a workforce opportunity portal to provide Floridians with access to federal, state, and local workforce services and a global view of workforce-related program data including education and training options, real-time labor market information, career planning and career services tools, and other support linked to in-demand jobs.
- Requirement for the Department of Economic Opportunity (known as the (Florida Department of Commerce or Florida Commerce) effective July 2023) and the Department of Children and Families to evaluate the impact of workforce services on participants receiving benefits and welfare transition programs.

- Provision of additional flexibility in overseeing the state's workforce investment and streamlining of the administration of Florida's workforce development system while also increasing accountability by charging the Department of Economic Opportunity (Florida Commerce) with preparing a federal waiver allowing CareerSource Florida to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of local workforce development boards or reduce the number of local workforce development boards.
- Assignment of a letter grade for local workforce development boards based on criteria including performance accountability measures, return on investment and improvement of the long-term self-sufficiency of participants.
- Staggered eight-year term limits for certain members of local workforce development boards and establishment of additional performance and accountability requirements for board compliance.
- Authorization for the Department of Economic Opportunity (Florida Commerce) to prepare a federal waiver to create greater flexibility and strategic investment in Florida's WIOA implementation.
- Identification of the Labor Market Estimating Conference as the entity responsible for determining Florida's real-time supply and demand in the labor market.
- Provision of guidelines for consistency of data collection across the workforce and education systems.
- Direction to the Department of Education, in coordination with other entities, for the creation of a workforce development metrics dashboard that shows the impact of workforce-related programs on credential attainment, training completion, degree attainment and participants' wages.
- Requirement for the Department of Economic Opportunity (Florida Commerce), with input from the state workforce development board and others, to establish WIOA eligible training provider criteria focused on participant outcomes.
- Establishment of the Open-Door Grant Program to create a demand-driven supply of credentialed workers for high-demand occupations and expand the affordability of workforce training, certification, and credentialing programs.
- Creation of the Money-Back Guarantee Program, which establishes a tuition refund for students who do not find a job within six months after completing select programs designed to prepare them for in-demand occupations.

For more details about the far-reaching blueprint that seeks to address the evolving needs of Florida's economy: [Online Sunshine – Section 14.36, Florida Statutes](#).